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Seven feared dead as hoodlums invade Lekki community

SEPTEMBER 15, 2014 BY AFEEZ HANAFI 1 COMMENT



No fewer than seven persons were feared dead after hoodlums stormed a community in the Lekki Phase 1, Eti-Osa Local Government Area, Lagos, and razed about 500 cabins.

It was learnt that the assailants had laid siege to the community named Otodo Gbame while a large number of its residents

had left for their places of work.

Those that were around reportedly scamped for safety as the attackers chased them with weapons and set about 500 cabins ablaze, including homes, churches and schools. One of the men who were trying to put out the fire was said to have been shot and hacked with cutlasses. Others sustained various degrees of injuries.

Four-year-old twins and a three-month-old baby were reported to have been trapped in the inferno, while four other children were still missing as of the time of filing this report.

Our correspondent further gathered that the hoodlums were led by one Wasiu. The alleged ring leader, *PUNCH Metro* learnt, had ordered the residents to leave the community, claiming that it belonged to his family.

On a visit to the community on Friday, *PUNCH Metro* observed traces of blood, broken bottles, burnt clothes and household items entangled in the rubble of the cabins, while some residents were busy searching for one valuable or the other.

The *Baale* of the community, Hunpe Dansu, said the community was still searching for four missing children. He stated further that the invasion was reported at the Jakande Police Station and the Divisional Police Officer, adding that no policeman had visited the place.

He said, "They set our buildings ablaze. We don't know our offence. Apart from the three children that were trapped in the inferno and one man they shot dead, four other children are still missing.

One of the victims, Azanpo Boniface, said, "I was trying to put out the fire in my building when they attacked me."

Another victim, Banabas Wetewu, who was hacked in the cheek, could not speak. Sympathisers said the cut penetrated into his mouth.

An eyewitness, Anasu Emmanuel, said, "They were like Boko Haram people. I managed to take some pictures and record some videos. I saw the twins and a baby in the fire but I could not help or else I would have been killed too. Their mothers were confused trying to pick one or two things. We don't even know their whereabouts since the incident happened."

Residents also said that the attackers exploited the confusion to steal some of their valuables.

A food seller, who identified herself simply as Iya Ibadan, said all that she had accumulated for 10 years had been shattered by the assailants.

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She said, "This is my tenth year in Lagos. All my property had been spoilt. I don't have anything left."

A bar operator, Joseph Idisu, said a plasma television, laptop and beers worth N32,000 were stolen from his bar.

Another resident, Ogechi Diminic, said, "My sisters and I were at our places of work when we received a call that the place was on fire. Before any of us could get home, all our property had been burnt. The only things we have left are the dresses we are putting on now."

A youth leader in the community, Mr. Samson Sose, said Wasiu had been evacuating sand from their surroundings for supply and wanted them to vacate the land to expand his activity.

"He wants us to leave so that he can have enough sand to sell. For the fear of other attacks, people have started packing out already even though they don't have anywhere to go to," he said.

Efforts to speak with Wasiu proved abortive. However, a man who said he was Wasiu's uncle, and identified himself as Chief Segun, said the community was part of their family land. He added that Wasiu was not the person that attacked the area.

He said, "There is no community like Otodo Gbame. The youth in that area are armed robbers and hooligans. I learnt there was fighting and some people were injured. Wasiu did not lead any gang and nobody was killed."

The council Chairman, Mr. Anofu Elegushi, said Wasiu and others had gone to the community, which he described as a black spot, to sanitise it.

"The place is a security threat to people. They were accommodated there on temporary basis after they were displaced from the Banana Island. Wasiu and other boys only went for sanitisation. It was unfortunate that it turned to violence. Nobody died though people were injured," he said.

Calls made to the Lagos State Police spokesperson, Ngozi Braide rang out. She had also yet to reply to the messages sent to her phones.

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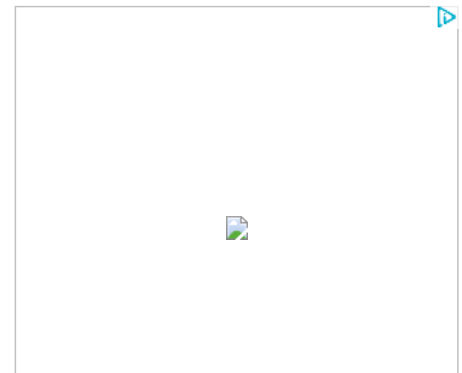


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