

Cult members raze police station over colleague's death

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Suspected cult members have burnt down the divisional headquarters of the Nigeria Police in Oporoma, headquarters of the Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State.

It was learnt that the attack on the police station, which occurred on Wednesday, was carried out after a suspected cult member involved in the rescue operation of another cult member in the station was shot

dead by a policeman.

The Convener of a non-governmental organisation, Patriotism Advancement and Community Orientation Network, Aluzu Augustine, said the incident threw the community into pandemonium.

“The police station in Oporoma, Southern Ijaw LGA has been razed. Lives of some policemen are at risk,” he said in a text message sent to our correspondent.

The Police Public Relations Officer, Bayelsa State Command, Mr. Asinim Butswat, confirmed the incident.

He said, “A report indicates that a suspected cult member, who was on police wanted list for heinous crimes such as kidnapping, sea robbery, armed robbery and pipeline vandalism, was arrested and detained at the Oporoma Police Division in Silga.

“The incident occurred preparatory to the suspect’s transfer to the State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department, Yenagoa.

“The suspect, on March 21, 2018, attempted to escape from custody and was shot by the police officer on duty.

“Other members of the suspect’s cult group mobilised and attacked officers on duty at the division and set the station ablaze. Additional policemen were deployed in the area to restore normalcy in the community.”

The police spokesman, who expressed worry over increasing cult activities in the state, called on members of the public to volunteer useful information to assist the police in curbing the trend among youths.

Meanwhile, the Bayelsa State House of Assembly on Wednesday commenced the process to amend the Secret (Cult) Bill to include a 20-year jail term for persons arrested and sentenced for cult-related violence and activities in the state.

The motion for amendment, which was moved on the floor of the House by the leader of the House, Peter Akpe (Sagbama 2), also included a legal backing for the Nigeria Police to search any vehicle suspected to be carrying arms and ammunition.

The motion also empowered the police to arrest and a magistrate to remand any suspect arrested for cult-related activities for 30 days.

The amendment also empowered the state Governor to revoke the Certificate of Occupancy of any property or premises used to hold meetings of cult groups in the state.

While deliberating on the amendment, Assembly members agreed that with the rise in cult activities and killings in the state, the amendment would provide the needed support for security personnel to deal with suspected cult groups without legal restraints.

Akpe, who presented the first reading of the amendment, also sought the permission of the House for expeditious reading of the Bill at second reading, adding that the amendment was needed to strengthen the law against cult gangs in the state.

Another lawmaker, Ben Ololo (Nembe 2), urged the state Assembly to make provision for the prosecution and arrest of those involved in the sponsorship and hiring of the services of suspected cult members in the state, saying the development would save Bayelsa youths from early grave.

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