

Cultists kill final- year medical student, four others

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Some of the victims

Alexander Okere, Benin

There was pandemonium in Ekpoma town, in the Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State, when no fewer than five persons, said to be students of the Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, were reportedly killed by suspected cult members.

PUNCH Metro learnt that the incident occurred during a graduation party in the Judges Quarters area of the town on Tuesday.

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It was gathered that trouble started when a fight broke out between two persons at the party over an undisclosed matter.

One of them reportedly claimed that his shirt was torn during the brawl and left the scene angrily.

He was said to have later returned to the venue with a group of armed men, who opened fire on his perceived enemy, killing him instantly.

The gunmen were also said to have shot four other guests, who had attempted to make peace during the fight.

It was gathered that among the deceased were a final-year medical student of the school, Einstein Chinedum; a graduate recently mobilised for the National Youth Service Corps, Jerry Omobude; a serving member of the NYSC, Ugwi Martha, and one Ose Abulu.

But the Edo State Police Command said one person was killed in the attack.

The state Commissioner of Police, Mr Johnson Kokumo, who spoke to our correspondent on Wednesday, described the incident as a clash between rival cults.

Kokumo said those who sustained gunshot wounds were taken to an undisclosed hospital.

He noted that no fewer than four suspects had been arrested, adding that arms and ammunition were recovered from them.

The commissioner said, “I am currently in Osun State for a national assignment. But the report reaching me stated that five people were shot in a cult supremacy battle.

“The people at war were members of different cults. The shooting was as a result of cult rivalry; that is the information reaching me.

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“Arrests have been made. I think four to six people have been arrested with weapons.

“The information as of yesterday was that five people were shot; one was confirmed dead and the remaining four were taken to a hospital.”

Efforts to reach the Public Relations Officer of the university, Mr Edward Aihevba, were unsuccessful as he neither picked his calls nor responded to a text message sent to his mobile number as of the time of filing the report.

When contacted, the institution's Dean of Students Affairs, Mr Don Akhilomen, dismissed reports that the attack claimed many lives.

Akhilomen, however, said one of the victims (Omobude) was a former member of the legislative arm of the Students Union Government in the university.

He said, "What we heard was that four or five people were victims. The police will be in a better position to give official information on this matter."

When asked if the school could confirm that the deceased were students of the university, he said, "It is when their identities become clear that we would know whether they were students of our school.

"But I know of one (Omobude) who was a graduate of our university. He graduated last year; he was a parliamentarian on campus."

The dean, however, noted that the management of the institution had cautioned students against organising parties for security reasons.

"In fact, a department whose students had a wild jubilation faced disciplinary actions and that was communicated, even before this incident, to serve as a deterrent to others," he added.

Meanwhile, it was gathered that students of the institution had been living in fear since the incident occurred, as some of them living outside the campus fled their hostels for fear of a reprisal.

One of them, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said, "People are afraid to leave the campus, especially as we are preparing for our exams, which will begin on Friday.

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“The party was organised individually and different people attended. Some students prefer to hold their parties outside the school where they will not be interrupted by the university authority.”

An alumnus of the university, Mr President Aigbokhan, decried the prevalence of cult-related activities in the area.

Aigbokhan called on the management of the institution to scale up efforts towards eradicating the menace.