

Tension in Imo as seven suya sellers killed in two days

Chidiebube Okeoma, Owerri 5 April 2021

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Imo State Governor, Governor Hope Uzodinma

There was panic in Imo State on Friday and Saturday as gunmen murdered seven *suya* sellers.

PUNCH Metro learnt that the traders were killed in separate shootings in Orlu and Umuaka in the Njaba Local Government Area of the state.

An eyewitness, Harisu Ishiaku, said that the suspected killers, who were dressed in military uniform and numbered more than seven, stormed the Afor Umuaka Market around 8.30pm, accosted the victims in their shops and shot them.

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He said four of the victims were in the age bracket of 30 to 45 and had lived in the area for many years without any trouble or attack from any member of the community.

While suspecting those, who carried the attack to be strangers in the land, Ishiaku pointed out that before now, there had never been any problem between the traders and the Umuaka community.

According to the Imo State Coordinator of Hausa traders, Mallam Ibrahim Abdulkadir, the first incident happened on Friday as three *suya* (roasted meat) sellers were about to close for the day when gunmen in a Sienna car emerged from nowhere and shot at them.

He said in a similar commando style, the gunmen operating in the same vehicle shot dead four Hausa traders at Umuaka.

Abdulkadir stated that Hausa traders in Orlu now live in fear as some had relocated to Owerri.

He said, "Actually, this thing started since on April 2. I was called that three persons had been killed by some men operating in a Siena car. The victims were *suya* sellers and were killed just as they were closing their shop in the night.

"Just as we were about to handle the situation, yesterday (Saturday) I was called again that four persons were killed by the same people."

Our correspondent learnt that the bodies of the victims had been taken to Owerri in preparation to burying them according to Muslim rites.

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The Senior Special Assistant to the Governor on Gender, Vulnerable Groups, Northern Affairs (Men), Ibrahim Sulaiman, said the state government, as well as security agencies, were on top of the matter.

While calling for peace to reign, the SA said Governor Hope Uzodinma was disturbed by the incident and was poised to bring the perpetrators justice.

“We have just finished a meeting with government officials and head of security agencies in the state. They’ve intervened in the matter to ensure that peace reigns. We cannot continue like this. We must nip this in the bud for the peace and security of our country,” Sulaiman stated.

He appealed to his northern brothers to remain calm and continue to be their brothers’ keeper at all times.

While saying that the killings were politically motivated by people who never wished the government and people of Imo State well, he expressed regret that the situation was getting out of hand.

Sulaiman assured the northern community of the commitment of the state government to putting a stop to the attacks.

Efforts to speak with the Police Public Relations Officer, Orlando Ikeokwu, were not fruitful as his phones indicated that they were unreachable.

He had yet to respond to a text message sent to his mobile phone as of the time of filing this report.