

Cultists kill 10-year-old girl at Kwara market during fresh supremacy battle

Afeez Hanafi 17 October 2021

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Oja Oba area of Ilorin

Two siblings identified as Mariam and Abdulraheem have been shot in a fresh cult attack in the Oja Oba area of Ilorin, Kwara State, with the former succumbing to death.

Mariam, aged 10, reportedly died from gunshot wounds she sustained when some suspected cult members invaded the ancient market around 9.30pm on Thursday and shot indiscriminately in different directions.

It was learnt that Mariam and three-year-old Abdulraheem, who was shot in the hand, were first and last kids in the family of four children.

There has been a running battle between members of two rival cult groups – Eye and Aiye confraternities – in the state capital in recent times.

Sunday PUNCH learnt that some Aiye members trailed a target from the rival group popularly known as Efo to Ile Film (close to the market) but did not succeed in hunting him down.

They were said to have extended the hunt to the market where a police station is located, shooting indiscriminately as people scampered to safety.

It was gathered that Mariam and Abdulraheem were with their mother, Kehinde, who sells bread at a stand within the market, when a stray bullet hit them.

A trader, Iyabo Uthman, told our correspondent on Saturday that Mariam died on the spot while her younger brother was receiving treatment.

She said another woman, who sells roasted chicken near Kehinde's stand, also sustained gunshot injuries in the shoulder.

Uthman stated, "There are some traders in the market who operate in the evening because of the nature of their business. The market was bubbling around 9.30pm on Thursday when we suddenly began to hear gunshots.

"There was confusion everywhere. Stray bullets hit Mariam and her brother, Abdulraheem, in the process. They were about 10 years old and three years old respectively. Mariam died that night but her brother survived and was rushed to a hospital.

"I learnt that Mariam lived with a relative in Abuja and just came back about four days to the incident. Bullets also hit a woman who sells chicken in the market."

A resident around the market, who identified himself simply as Lukman, said a young man was also hacked to death at Agaka, a community bordering the market.

Lukman, who lamented recurring cult attacks in the city, said many shops did not open on Friday out of fear.

He said, "The fight was between Eye and Aiye cult members. Some Aiye members traced a member of Eye called Efo to Ile Film. They started shooting from there down to Oja Oba, close to the police station. Five persons were hit by bullets. Two of the victims were siblings; one of them died.

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“They also hacked a young man called Sulyman to death at Agaka. He was going to check on his ailing father when they attacked him.”

Another trader, Sherifat Solihu, told *Sunday PUNCH* that life was gradually returning to the market.

“Some of us opened shops today (Saturday) though we are still in fear. The death of that little girl was really painful,” she added.

The Police Public Relations Officer in the state, SP Ajayi Okasanmi, confirmed the attack but said he was not aware of any fatalities.

He said the police had launched a manhunt for the hoodlums and some suspects were arrested.

He said, “I know there was a cult attack that day but it was not brought to my notice that anybody was killed. Maybe the deaths were not reported at the police station. The Commissioner of Police mobilised operatives from anti-cultism and anti-kidnapping units with the police division to comb the area. Some suspects were arrested.”

The Thursday attack renewed prolonged hostilities between the two rival cult groups.

A student at the Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin, was killed on August 26, 2021 while two others sustained severe injuries during a cult clash at the Institute of Technology area of the state polytechnic.

From Sunday, May 16 to Tuesday, May 18, two members of rival cults lost their lives in clashes at the Okelele area of Ilorin.

One of the groups on Sunday killed a middle-aged man from the other group on the premises of a secondary school in the neighbourhood. In a reprisal on Tuesday, there were similar attacks in the Kankatu and Isale-Odo areas of the Okelele community, resulting in the death of another victim.

On Tuesday, August 3, a student at the Kwara Polytechnic was reportedly killed in a cult clash. The victim, identified as Olawale, was reportedly beheaded while his severed head was later found around Unity Roundabout, Ilorin.