

# Rampaging cultists kill nine on Valentine's Day, two arrested

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Rivers State CP, Okon Effiong

By Dennis Naku

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No fewer than nine persons have been killed during a clash between rival cult groups in Ikata, Upata kingdom, in the Ahoada East Local Government area of Rivers State.

*PUNCH Metro* gathered that the members of the two cult groups had a disagreement that degenerated and thereafter engaged themselves in an exchange of gunfire that caused panic in the community.

A source in the community, while speaking to our correspondent, said during the clash, residents and business owners in the community ran helter-skelter to keep safe.

“Most people ran to avoid being hit by stray bullets, while some remained indoors. Business owners hurriedly closed their shops to avoid being caught up in the clash,” the source stated.

The state Police Public Relations Officer, Grace Iringe-Koko, who confirmed the clash, said an investigation had commenced.

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Iringe-Koko added that the state Commissioner of Police had ordered the deployment of the tactical unit to restore normalcy in the area.

She said, “Yes, I can confirm the incident. About nine people died. It was a rival cult clash on Valentine's Day. An investigation is ongoing and the CP has deployed the tactical unit to the area.

“For now, the Divisional Police Officer and the Joint Task Force have visited the area for an on-the-spot-assessment of the crime scene. Following the development by the CP, two persons have been arrested in connection with the killings and they have made statements that will assist us in our investigation.

“As we speak, our men are still on the ground there and calm has returned to the community. We will ensure that the fleeing suspects are arrested and brought to book.”