

# Four killed as suspected cultists attack Bayelsa community

22nd April 2025



By Samuel Ese

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Four persons have been confirmed dead and several others injured as suspected cultists invaded the Swali community in the heart of Yenagoa, the Bayelsa State capital, on Easter Sunday.

PUNCH Online gathered that the masked assailants arrived in the community at about midnight in a Toyota Hilux van armed with assault weapons such as AK47 and started shooting indiscriminately at residents celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

A resident, who did not want to be named, described the attack as terrible and said that since he took up residence in the riverine suburb, he had not witnessed such violence unleashed on innocent citizens.

“It was terrible, I have never seen anything like this since I started living here over 10 years ago,” he told Punch Metro on Tuesday.

According to him, the attack was not connected to armed robbers as the gunmen did not steal any property, but just aimed at their targets and took off.

Although calm was restored following the attack, there remained an uneasy calm as fear still hovered over the community, which had witnessed other cult-related violence in the past.

Swali Community, which hosts the Swali Ultra Modern Market, the largest market in the state, is close to several security formations in the state.

It was also gathered that two cult groups, the Greenlanders and Bobos, have been fighting for supremacy in the community, but it was not certain if the attack was related to their ongoing feud.

The member representing Yenagoa Constituency 1 in the Bayelsa State House of Assembly, Ayibanegiyefa Egba, has condemned the brutal attack that resulted in the tragic loss of four lives of her constituents.

Egba visited the community on Tuesday and described the attack as barbaric and expressed condolences to the families of the deceased and the entire Swali community.

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She emphasised the need for unity and vigilance within the community to resist external forces and advised the youths to shun vices that could truncate their lives.

Egba said, “This attack is brutal and I condole with the families of those who have lost loved ones. I called on all the residents to be united and vigilant in the face of this incident.

“I equally call on the youths to shun external influences and also shun vices that can truncate their lives.”

The Paramount Ruler of Swali Community, HRH Wilcox Seiyefa Job, called on the state government to mount police posts at strategic locations in order to avert future attacks.

Chief Job pleaded with the government to help ensure the safety and security of his subjects from future attacks, explaining that the community had requested the mounting of a police post to beef up security.

His words, “I called on the state government to set up police posts at strategic points to avert future attacks and also establish a police station in the community in order to safeguard the lives of my subjects.”

When contacted, the Bayelsa State Police Public Relations Officer, Mr Musa Mohammed, who confirmed the attack, said security has been beefed up to restore normalcy in the community.

He said the attack may not be related to a cult clash, but law enforcement measures were in place to ensure no further breakdown of law and order or destruction of lives and property happens in that community again.

“Normalcy has returned to the community and security measures have been put in place to ensure no further breakdown of law and order or destruction of lives and property,” Mohammed stated.