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10 killed in fresh Rivers violence

By HENRY CHUKWURAH, & CHRIS IKWUNZE, Port Harcourt.
 Friday, August 24, 2007

Fleeing cultists linked with the recent mayhem in Port Harcourt were said to have killed no fewer than 10 persons in two separate incidents in parts of Rivers State .

In one of the incidents that occurred in Rumuekpe in Emohua Local Government Area of the State, about nine persons were said to have been felled in a renewed communal clash that broke out Wednesday.

Most of the dead were said to be youths. Already, many of the villagers have fled their homes.

In another incident in Bodo City in Gokana Local Government Area, a boy identified as Baribor Kerebion, was macheted to death by suspected cultists.

Village sources told Daily Sun that the boy was killed for the 'sins' of his elder brother.

The brother of the deceased was allegedly involved in a disagreement with members of one of the major cult groups in the community over the sharing of money realised from an undisclosed transaction.

The angry cultists were said to have stormed his home and although they missed their target, his younger brother, who was at home at the time of the invasion, was dealt several machete cuts.

Efforts by neighbours to save his life were frustrated when the cultists threatened to deal with a local pharmacist to whom the boy was taken for treatment. Consequently, he bled to death.

Reports say the curfew imposed by the Rivers State Government last week in the wake of mindless killings and shooting by suspected cult gangs has been extended by one more week.

Meanwhile, residents of Marine Base, Borokiri and Nembe Water fronts are yet to return since two weeks after they fled their homes.

Our reporter, who visited the areas, reports that houses were still under locks and key. Apart from the soldiers who patrol the areas, no other sign of life or economic activities were seen.

At Marine Base market, the reporter saw heaps of decomposing food items and fruits abandoned by their fleeing owners while the Okrika

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Jetty was a shadow of its bustling self.

Some of the displaced residents, who are scattered in various parts of the city, said that the presence of the soldiers were not enough guarantee for their safety as the cultists and militants could strike anytime you least expect.

“Don’t forget that these boys (cultists) are masters of the creeks and the various apiam ways in the waterfronts. They can spring surprise anytime you least expect it. The soldiers were merely patrolling the roads and streets and extorting money from passers-by and were no match to the boys in the war of attrition,” one of the displaced residents who gave his name as Sokari said.

Meanwhile, the curfew imposed by the Rivers State Government in the wake of the hostilities penultimate week is having telling effect on residents and business concerns.

With the chaotic traffic situation in the city, it is now common to see all roads jammed, beginning from 5pm, due to the rush by commuters and vehicle owners to get home.

The situation is worsened by the absence of traffic policemen and other private traffic controllers who must abandon their duty post at 5 pm to get home. Commuters are forced to trek long distances to get to their homes.

Business concerns are not faring better as they complained of low level of patronage due to the curfew. Those mostly affected are drinking joints, cyber café, club houses, and casinos that must all close early to avoid running foul of the law.

Some residents have called on the state government to consider suspending the curfew now that the situation has been brought under control or on the alternative extend the period to 9pm to ease the present hardship being experienced by residents.

