

who was to graduate this year.

Commanding officer, NNS Delta, Warri Naval Base, Navy Commodore Musa Gemu, who gave an insight into the incident,

what was happening, the entire area had been engulfed by fire.

"As soon as the whole area caught fire, oil workers in the neighbourhood fled for their

A leader of Odidi community, Friday Deinghan, who bemoaned the incident, regretted that the victims were in a fishing boat three kilometres away from the spot of

the community had become a no-go-area, disclosing that angry youths were marching over the community in protest against the unfortunate incident.

Sorrow, tears, as cultists terrorise Warri communities

FROM EMMANUEL OGOIGBE
WARRI

Palpable fear has crept into the twin-city of Ugbori and Ekurede-Itsekiri in Warri, Delta State, as cultists have devastated the sleepy town and took over control of the communities.

Residents of the area, both the natives and the non-indigenes, are now gripped with fear of attack by the suspected cultists. Eyewitnesses said the cultists were always harassing the inhabitants.

Investigation revealed that two rival groups have been at each other's throats in the area in the past two weeks, following the brutal killing of a member of another group.

Many of the community leaders have refused to speak on the incident. It was gathered that anyone that speaks on the evil activities of the cultists might be killed by the cultists.

Both towns are Itsekiri communities in the domain of the Olu of Warri, Ogiame Atuwatse II. "One would expect that these nagging youths should show some degree of respect for the Warri monarch, but the reverse is the case," said an indigene who does not want his name in print.

But the councilor representing the two communities in the Warri South Local Government Area, Hon Kingsely Afere Tenumah, who spoke with *Daily Sun*, expressed great worry over the turn of events in the communities where peace had reigned for decades.



• Deserted street

He is most worried that the hoodlums have turned the area into a battlefield, thus creating unnecessary fear and tension in the area.

He said the culprits, whose age ranges between 16 and 20 years, are ignorantly killing themselves for nothing. "Presently, residents are fleeing the area. Above all, the cultists now break stores and personal houses to loot and also extort money from anybody in sight. It is a pity that since February this year, the area has not known peace," the councilor lamented even as he called for restraint on both sides.

According to him, many petitions have been written to the Police Area Commander

to intervene and stop the bloodshed and harassment, regretting that there had been no response from the police authorities.

Hon. Tenumah, who is the Chairman, Peace and Security Committee of the council's legislative arm, said some of the warring cultists were willing to renounce their membership of the cults, noting, however, that they were terribly afraid of reprisal attacks from their members "even when we have promised to protect their interest."

The councilor warned that whoever refused to renounce his membership of the cult groups would be shown the way



• Hon. Tenumah

out of the area "because we don't want any miscreant to soil the good name of our people."

He further noted: "Regrettably, police are not taking action because these hoodlums always find their ways back home unscathed without any trial. In fact, it is a known fact that with this action, the police are one way or the other encouraging them."

As a result of the activities of the cultists, a curfew has been imposed on the two communities, lasting between 8pm and 6am.

According to Hon. Tenumah a petition would soon be forwarded to the state governor, Dr. Emmanuel Uduaghan, Olu of Warri, Ogiame Atuwatse II and other security chiefs and prominent Itsekiri sons and daughters to intervene and save the area from destruction