

Masquerade kills one, community deserted

By Christopher Oji

ONE person was killed and two others injured during a New Yam Festival in Njaba in Oru East Local Government Area of Imo State.

Crime Watch Today gathered that last Sunday, a group of youths had come from neighbouring community, Amiri, to watch the traditional masquerade during the Atta Njaba New Yam Festival. One of the visitors was allegedly beaten and charmed by the masquerade and he started bleeding. It was gathered that the victim later died and when the news got to his community, the youths mobilised and stormed the palace of the traditional ruler of Atta, the venue of the festival and disrupted the ceremony.

The youths, who stormed the place with dangerous weapons, sacked the entire community. A youth leader from Atta Njaba, Francis Ugo, told *Crime Watch Today* that "it took the intervention of joint military patrol to suppress the rampage, if not for the security agents who responded on time, many lives would have been lost."

Ugo said it was not really clear whether the victim died or not but I know that he was beaten by a masquerade. I can not really say what his offence was but he must have done something before he was beaten by the masquerade. In fact, our town has been deserted because we are afraid that the Amiri people, who vowed to avenge the death of their kinsman may take us by surprise. As I am talking to you, I am in hiding, we are supposed to have a funeral ceremony but I can not attend. I think the burial can only be done under heavy security presence.

"I am appealing to the state commissioner of police to wade into the matter and provide security for us. The police are aware of the tense situation. They are aware of the invasion of our town by Amiri people; we are now like refugees in our country."

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