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Blood, more blood as cult clashes spread

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78 killed in three months

By Vincent Kalu

WHILE engaging in supremacy battle, cult groups maim, kill and leave behind of blood, and the attendant sorrow, grief and heartache. Records of cult-related killings in the last three months have shown that no fewer than 78 people have been killed across the country.

In the past, cult activities were restricted to the universities, polytechnics and colleges of education, but the trend has since changed. Today, residents of some communities in Lagos, Rivers, Imo, Edo, Bayelsa, Kogi, Benin, Delta, Anambra, Enugu, Cross River, Ogun, Ondo, Kwara and Abia states among others, where tertiary institutions are located , live in palpable fear as cultists have taken their dastard activities from the campuses to the streets. In broad daytime, the cultists brazenly wield dangerous weapons without fear of being apprehended.

Again, with the passage of time, some of the students who were rusticated by various institutions of higher learning over alleged involvement in cultism and other criminal activities have infested their areas of habitation / neighbourhood with cult activities. As a result, many streets and neighbourhoods as well as villages now have cult groups in the areas. Worse still, it has now become an all comers' affair as secondary school students including girls are joining cult groups in droves.

Some of the cultists have taken their game a notch higher by engaging in armed robbery, thuggery, kidnapping and becoming hired assassins. Some of the notable cult groups include: Black Axe, Aye or Axe men Confraternity, Eiye Confraternity, Supreme Vikings Confraternity (SVC), Daughters of Jezebel, Black Brazier, White Angels, Viqueens, Damsels, Elebe Boys, De-Well, De-Ggbam, Awawa Confraternity, Bourkina Faso, Mafia, among others.

There have been cases of cult clashes in different parts of the country. This is aside reports of the bloody clashes that occur in the university campuses, which oftentimes, claim the lives of the innocent students, hitherto, deceived and coerced to join cult groups.

Psychologist's point of view

On why there is upsurge in cultism in the neighbourhoods, Dr. Kayode Taiwo, an associate professor and Head of Department of Psychology, Lagos State University, Ojo, told Saturday Sun that many people attribute the upsurge to the rising number of young unemployed graduates of universities, polytechnics and colleges of education across the country.

" That is the thinking of many, but what they fail to realise is that if the Nigerian state has failed in providing jobs for them, likewise have their parents and guardians failed to give them values as they were growing up. The value of a man more or less defines his expectation.

"For instance, that an individual is educated up to tertiary institution level but has no job is not a reason to engage in cultism if that person has good values. The values of many of these young adults tare incomparable to the values of the people of yesteryears.

"While it might take a thousand people long time to build something that is enduring, it may take just one or two bad eggs to wreak havoc within".

On how secondary students are indoctrinated, Dr. Taiwo, said, the younger elements are able to penetrate adolescents, teenagers because they have a way of relating with them. "When you talk in terms of those that are cultists, all you need to ask yourself is, what is the age range; from 16 to about 30 or 35; majorly between 18 and 26. So, it is easier for them to go into the neighbourhoods and indoctrinate these younger ones that they relate with.

"For example, from research study and practical interaction, during interactivity session, you would discover that those who were into drugs were indoctrinated earlier by those who were older. It's not that they woke up one day and started smoking weeds, but they pick the habbits from what they saw on television, what they read, and from some of the people they related with.

"Why don't you ask how these young people are able to get these drugs they use? When they are indoctrinated they were also told how to get the drugs. So, cultism is now more of a fad, something that add pepper to the self esteem of the so-called cultists, and in the process of getting involved in cultic activities they also get indoctrinated into drug taking".

The university don postulated that the nation is going to experience more increase in cultism at the institutions and neighbourhoods because there are so many young people who are into it even in the secondary schools, including schoolgirls.

**In the last three months**

On April 3, four persons were killed in Ilorin, during a fight between members of two rival cult groups over supremacy.

A week before, suspected members of cult groups struck at Ikororo/Sakamo area of Ilorin and allegedly killed a boy simply identified as Wasiu. The cult clash occurred at Babako, Ita-Amodu and Agbo-Oba areas of Ilorin. The clash heightened tension in the affected areas while residents scamped to safety. At the end of the clash, four persons including a 20-year old boy were allegedly shot. Report has it that members of "Aiye" Confraternity first struck at Baboko around 9.30 p.m. last Saturday night and allegedly killed two persons. At the end of the operation at Baboko, the suspected cultists headed for Ita-Amodu and Agbo-Oba areas of the capital on revenge mission.

On the same day in Kogi State, suspected cultists killed seven as they shifted their activities from the campuses into the city centres where parents of the victims could watch how their children were being killed.

Residents of Lokoja, Kogi State capital could no longer sleep with both eyes closed as cult war spreads within the city. The cultists trailed their targets to their residences or wherever they were taking refuge, dragged them out and killed them in public glare.

No fewer than seven of the suspected cultists met their Waterloo in the hands of their rivals at Adakolo, Kabawa and Ganaja areas of the city, while their parents watched helplessly.

According to sources, it all started when "Elebe Boys" and "Eiye Boys" engaged one another in serious altercation, which resulted in the death of two members of Elebe Boys who later went on to avenge the death of their colleagues.

On February 4, two persons were reportedly killed in Ondo town, during clashes involving two cults groups.

It was gathered that the two incidents happened in the Okesida and Odojomu areas, causing pandemonium in the areas.

A source said that one of the deceased, identified as Segun, was killed at a relaxation centre in Odojomu following an attack on him by some cultists, who stormed the place on motorcycles.

The source said, "The man was hacked with machetes and shot several times by the hoodlums. He died on the way to a hospital. The killers were on a mission to avenge the killing of one of their members, Korede Awosika, who was allegedly murdered by Segun's group."

In Imo State on March 29, about five people died in cult clashes between Mgbolo Okuku and Obogwu communities in Owerri West local government.

Also on March 18, two persons were killed, and others injured when a deadly cult war ensued between two gangs in Owo Local Government areas of Ondo State. Some cultists attacked Owo town, and invaded communities like Ogbonmo, Oke Dogbon and Idaniken, causing chaos among residents.

On March 26, at Agbor, Delta State, four suspected cultists were killed in a clash between Aiye and Black Axe Baga at Owa in Ika North-East Local Government Area of Delta State. One of those killed is believed to be a politician from Ute Okpu in the same local government area.

There had been rivalry between the two cult groups over who had control of the area, and this had resulted in attacks, counter-attacks and killings for about four years.

On January 18, a renewed violent clash between rival groups in Benin City, Edo State, left no fewer than five persons dead. It was learned that the cult war was allegedly between members of Neo Black Movement (a.k.a. Aye) and Mafite group.

On April 4, in Akwa Ibom State, cult war left four people dead in Eket. The clash was between Junior Vikings Confraternity and the rival Axe Men Confraternity. Trouble started at a notorious nightclub on Ataobong Road in Eket and spilled over to Rescue Point at St. Gregory's area, off Liverpool Street.

In Cross River State, on February 8, at Obudu Local Government area, cult war between rival cult groups led to the killing of one Daddy Ishamali, who was said to be a staff of the Federal College of Education Obudu, and a younger brother to the wife of Governor Ben Ayade's younger brother, Dr. Frank Ayade.

On March 21, three persons were confirmed dead following renewed cult war in the Bayelsa State-owned Niger Delta University, Ammassoma in Southern Ijaw area of the state. The three persons killed are suspected to be students of the Engineering and English departments of the university. One of the victims, a 400 level engineering student was attacked with machete. Two other victims were discovered in the community river behind the school in the pool of their blood.

Also, on January 20 in Bayelsa, gunmen, suspected to be cultists shot and killed one person in Amarata area of Yenagoa Local Government area. The victim, popularly known as Ashanti, was reportedly shot somewhere close to his residence at about 8pm.

On March 29, at Ohaji-Egbema Local Government Area of Imo State, cultists killed nine people while avenging the killing of one of their members by their rival group. The victims including eight males and one female were killed when the De-Well cult group reportedly invaded Asa Awana community.

The killing of the nine persons was said to have been carried out by De-Well against the De-Ggbam cult group, which was alleged to have killed one of the De-Well members in the area.

On January 30, the arm of the law caught up with a 30-year old man, Usman Animashaun, and was remanded at the Ikoyi Prisons for allegedly belonging to a secret cult and stabbing a person to death in a revenge cult attack.

The accused is a member of the Eiye Fraternity Cult and he stabbed one Onatayo on his back and neck with a kitchen knife during one of their retaliation operations.

Also on January 20, the police paraded 11 suspects of cult killings in Kwara State for the gruesome murders of a car wash centre owner,

Alhaji Bayo Ajia and a middle-aged man Bukola Ajikobi in Ilorin.

The brutal killings simultaneously carried out at Agaka Area and Ibrahim Taiwo Road Underground Bridge were believed to have been masterminded by a cult syndicate led by the suspects.

On February 19, The Rapid Response Squad (RRS) in Lagos arrested 15 suspected cult members terrorising Agege area of the state. The police said that the suspected cultists were believed to be members of a notorious group called Awawa Confraternity.

On February 13, a cult group killed a middle-aged man, Charles Mba Okporie in Ogbu Edda community, Edda West Development Centre in Edda Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

On March 23, two students of Abia State University, Uturu, were beheaded by suspected rival cult group. The assailants said to be members of Bourkina Faso group, gained access into the room of the victims, said to be members of another cult group, Mafia. The victims, Nwigbo Chukwuebuka, a 300 level student of Estate Management and Samuel Ethelbert, a third year student of Political Science department were slaughtered and beheaded in their hostels. Umeaforo Chigozirim, also a 300 level Political Science undergraduate was luckier as he was not killed but sustained serious injuries resulting from machete cuts. The gruesome killing was said to be a revenge act by the Bourkina Faso group for the death of their leader, called Collins Agwu, alias Biggy, who was reportedly killed by the Mafia group. Bigwas said to have been buried on the day the two students were beheaded.

On January 24, the Lagos State Police Command arrested seven suspected cultists who engaged one another in supremacy battle in Bariga area of the state. The clash led to the killing of a 65-year old woman, Adejoke Adefuye. The deceased, Adefuye was burnt beyond recognition when her house located at 19, Oshinfolarin Street in Bariga was set ablaze by the rival group. Trouble started when members of *Eiye* confraternity led by one Ibrahim Balogun clashed with another group known as Aiye confraternity led by a man simply identified as Gideon in supremacy fight in the area. The cultists, according to reports, vandalized some vehicles parked along the road in the area, while two members of the Aiye known as Bobo and Abayomi Olubola lost their lives in the fracas.

Also in January, the Ikorodu carnival turned bloody as cultists killed a graduate identified as Usman. Another victim was shot dead by suspected cultists during a carnival in the Ikorodu area of Lagos State.

The graduate, and the other victim, identified simply as Abija, were initially attacked with axes, but managed to escape. Their assailants chased and reportedly caught up with them on Itun-Meko Street before shooting them dead.

On April 4, soldiers and some suspected cult members in Ubete community in Ahoada West Local Government Area of Rivers State, were engaged in fierce gun battle. Some people were feared to have sustained injuries.

On March 31, two Ekiti State University students, Ado Ekiti, Akintunde Olumide and Oladapo Olaoluwa, were sentenced to three years imprisonment for their involvement in cult activities. They are members of Black Axe.

On February 9, cultists bombed Agip gas pipeline facility in Akala Olu village, Ahoada West Local Government Area of Rivers State over the arrest and continued detention of a suspect, Emmanuel Odum.

On February 12, cultists on rampage killed 15 in Omoku, headquarters of Ogbu Egbema Ndoni Local Government Area of the state.

It was reported recently in Lagos State that, hardly any week passes, without cult gangs unleashing terror on innocent, law-abiding residents of areas such as Bariga, Mushin, Jibowu, Fadeyi, Onipanu, Palmgrove, Yaba, Old Apapa Road, Ilupeju, etc. The same scenario appears to be playing up in Rivers State.

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