

Anambra: Suspected cultists behead 1, kill 2 others in monarch's compound

From **Obinna Odogwu**, Awka

THERE is palpable fear in Okija community in Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State following the gruesome murder of two persons by suspected cultists.

There were, however, conflicting accounts on how it happened and in which village the incidents took place. While some held that it happened at Umuzu village, the others said that it occurred in Oghalegbu.

While one was killed and beheaded in a compound owned by a former traditional ruler, the other, according to sources, was killed elsewhere in the same community.

A trending video in the social media showed that his feet were cut off from the ankles even as he was inflicted with machete cuts on his body. The victim's head was taken away by his assailants as seen in the video.

The incident, Sunday Sun gathered, took place in a compound reportedly owned by the former traditional ruler of Umuzu community in Ogbaru LGA, Igwe Boniface Ubakanonu.

Former President General of the community, Chukwudum Ndedigwe, told Sunday Sun that Umuzu community was a village in Okija before they migrated to their present location in Ogbaru LGA where it is now a community.

He said that some of their people still live in Umuzu village in Okija where the incident happened. He confirmed that the compound where the incident took place belongs to their late monarch, Igwe Ubakanonu.

"Oghalegbu, Umuogu and Umuzu village where the killing of the young man took place are the descendants of Ikeasomba, our great grandfather", Ndedigwe narrated.

It was gathered that Okija community had lost about four men through the activities of rival cult groups in the area since November 2020.

A source in the community disclosed that there were sporadic shootings at the popular Nkwo Okija market by rival groups, adding that one of the groups later headed for Oghalegbu village where the two men were killed.

The source said: "One of the youths who was killed earlier was to be laid to rest today (Saturday) and on arrival at the Nkwo Okija market, his friends organized a ceremony at the market as the body was brought from the mortuary.

"While at Nkwo market, the youths identified the store of the mother of someone they suspected to be one of the murderers of the man and they vented their anger on the shop belonging to his mother.

"They ransacked and looted the store and threw the entire market into panic, with the traders scampering for safety."

As at the time of filing this report, sources said that youths from another village, Umuogu, were spoiling for a showdown in the community because they also lost another youth.

Confirming the ugly development, the Police Public Relations Officer in the state, DSP Ikenga Tochukwu, told Sunday Sun that the incident was a cult war between two rival cult groups.

"It is an incident that involved two rival cult groups in Okija. Arrest has been made and police operatives are on track to apprehend the rest that are at large.

"Meanwhile, the Commissioner of Police, CP Monday Kuryas, has called for calm and also called on parents to pay closer attention to their wards", the PPRO said.