

FROM OBINNA ODOGWU,
AWKA AND STANLEY
UZOALU, OWERRI

AT least 15 persons lost their lives within the week due to the resurgence of insecurity in the South-East. Seven died in Imo State with four others brutally murdered in Ikwo Local Government of Ebonyi State. The rest were in Anambra State.

This happened as the sit-at-home call by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and scaremongering from 'unknown' enforcers of non-existent orders grounded activities in the zone from Monday to Thursday.

It began with Onitsha and its environs literally going up in flames Sunday night and the early hours of Monday following sporadic attacks by gunmen in parts of the city.

They opened fire along Tony Umeh by Oraifite Street, Awada on Sunday evening shooting a couple and injuring others in the process.

At the 3-3 Junction, Federal Housing Estate, Onitsha near Nkwelwe Ezunaka, the daredevils engaged soldiers stationed there in a gun duel.

Though unconfirmed reports said the soldiers killed two of the gunmen, another version said it was the soldiers that suffered casualty.

Many of the residents fled their homes that night due to heavy gunshots that rent the air.

In the early hours of Monday, arsonists also burnt the Idemili North LGA secretariat in Ogidi, Margistrate Court and office of the Enugu Electricity Distribution Company (EEDC) with several vehicles and equipment destroyed.

Also, two enforcers of sit-at-home were also reportedly neutralized by security forces at Umuozze in Orumba axis of the state.

In Imo State, gunmen attempted to register their warning that people should observe their one-week sit-at-home call by attacking the palace of the Chairman of the State council of traditional rulers, Eze Emmanuel Okeke in Orlu.

They paid dearly for it, as six of them were gunned down by the combined effort of the police and military who responded swiftly. No life was lost on the side of the police but one of their vehicles was bombed by the hoodlums.

The incident had barely settled when rumour went viral that gunmen had invaded Owerri, the state capital on Monday.

There was pandemonium in the city and its environs as residents ran helter-skelter, some even injured themselves in the process while business premises that earlier opened that day were hurriedly shut.

On Tuesday, gunmen continued their nefarious activities also in Orlu. They shot a yet-to-be identified man at Banana Junction. According to a viral video of the incident, the man was coming from Owerri and on getting to the Banana Junction, some heavily armed men clad in black shot him and he died instantly.

For the Ekpomaaka community of Ikwo LGA in Ebonyi State, Tuesday, May 17, 2022, would remain horrible in their memory. That fateful night, some gunmen invaded the family compound of Steve Orogwu, Chairman of the council area and brutally killed three of his relatives and a security guard on duty. They also burnt down the family house of the Orogwus.



Bloody week in South-East

Gunmen intensify siege on Imo, Anambra, Ebonyi

15 killed in one week, vehicles, houses razed

Sit-at-home grounds zone from Monday to Thursday

IPOB denies involvement, bans crusades, rallies



UZODIMMA

The council boss was lucky as he was not at home when the hoodlums came calling. The gun-wielding criminals made a video and posted it on social media where they boasted that they would continue to deal ruthlessly with those stealing public funds.

"We are unknown gunmen right here in the compound of Steve Orogwu, Executive Chairman of Ikwo Local Government Area. Look at the kind of house he built with public funds. We are going to deal with him," they boasted in the video.

Orogwu who spoke to newsmen the following morning said: "They attacked my family compound at Ikwo at night and killed my elder brother and two of his sons and a security guard."

The State Governor, David Umahi, has since called for thorough investigation by security agencies in order to apprehend the culprits to face the wrath of the law. He also commiserated with families that lost their loved ones in the dastardly act.

Gunmen have lately held Anambra State hostage following resurgence of attacks across the state. From Ihiala to Nnewi South, down to Nnewi North to Aguata, the story has been the same, a story of blood and agony.

At first, they had been operating in Imo State but sometime last year or thereabout, they began encroaching into Anambra. Their



SOLUDO

first port of call was Ihiala LGA especially at the boundary areas between the two states.

The heartless fellows were killing and destroying property worth several millions for no justifiable reason. And they vowed to continue that until Nnamdi Kanu is released by the Federal Government.

What these merchants of death and destruction did not explain was if the Anambra State Government was holding Kanu in detention, or if President Muhammadu Buhari whose office is in faraway Abuja hails from Anambra.

Already, the criminals have visited Nnewi South where they wreaked havoc. On Thursday, 31 March, 2022, at about 12:30am, gunmen attacked the headquarters of the council in Ukpok, killing an unarmed security man. They also set the council secretariat on fire.

That came barely two weeks after criminals set the operational vehicle of Utuh community vigilante and their office in the same LGA ablaze. They also abducted one of their staff members before fleeing from the area.

Also, the attack on the headquarters came about four weeks after gunmen raided some communities in the same Nnewi South LGA, particularly Ezinor town, and disarmed the vigilante members.

Transition Committee Chairman of the LGA, Chieloka Okoye, confirmed the incident, saying "one of our security men died in the pro-



UMAHI

cess. They shot him. He was on night duty. He was not armed; just a normal gate man."

Police Public Relations Officer in the state, DSP Tochukwu Iken-ga, also confirmed the incident, describing it as suspected arson.

Nnewi North has not been spared. A number of people have been killed in that area even as property worth millions were also destroyed.

During their attack on Aguata LGA, they burnt the secretariat. They have equally killed a number of people in the area. The criminals razed three buildings, including the council security house and about two vehicles.

That happened hours after soldiers reportedly engaged some armed hoodlums at an area called Obuofia, located around Oko and Aguluezchukwu boundary area.

Sources in Ekwulobia said the gunmen first blocked the road leading to Ezinifite community and the one leading to Aguluezchukwu community through the side of the headquarters.

They said that the gunmen first went into the compound, drove everybody in the facility, including the workers, out before setting two main buildings inside the compound and the security house ablaze.

At about the same time, masked men numbering about 70 invaded the commercial city of Nnewi on motorcycles, shooting in the air.

The hoodlums were said to be armed with cutlasses and other dangerous weapons.

An eyewitness in Nnewi told Saturday Sun that the armed men were warning the residents not to come out the following day.

"They were going everywhere including around the teaching hospital. They went about warning people not to come out tomorrow."

"When traffic jam started building up, they began shooting in the air. That caused pandemonium. People ran helter-skelter for safety. It was around that time that we heard that Aguata LG headquarters had been set ablaze", the source said.

The state governor, Prof. Chukwuma Soludo, ordered security operatives in the state, particularly the police, to deal decisively with the criminals and ensure they were brought to book.

Presenting the 2022 revised budget to the state legislature on Thursday, Soludo lamented the insecurity in the state. He, however, assured that the state would overcome it.

"Among the challenges we inherited, a red treasury and pervasive insecurity especially with criminals taking the seven local governments of the south senatorial zone hostage were the most acute."

"We have chosen to confront the foundational issue of security head-on and expected that those profiting from the lucrative criminal enterprise would viciously fight back, and they have."

"Suffice it to say that so far, so good. They are testing our will and resolve. Let me assure you this: Anambra will win," Soludo assured.

However, IPOB has advised the General Superintendent of Deeper Christian Life Ministry, Pastor William Folorunsho Kumuyi to suspend his proposed crusade slated for Aba, Abia State over insecurity issues.

The group also ordered an All Progressives Congress (APC) governorship aspirant in Abia State, Chief Ikechi Emenike not to hold political rally in Umuahia, yesterday.

IPOB spokesman, Emma Powerful told Kumuyi a number of fake persons masquerading as IPOB members in the South-East might unleash mayhem on crusaders and put the blame on his group led by Nnamdi Kanu.