

Gunmen kill five, kidnap Osun College HOD, staff



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Herders abduct Rufus Giwa Poly, health workers

Help us, monarch begs Aare Onakakanfo, Gani Adams

Gunmen believed to be herdsmen invaded Esa- Oke in Oriade Local Government Area of Osun State and killed five people. Those killed in the Tuesday evening invasion included an employee of the Osun State College of Technology, Esa-Oke, identified as Olaniyi Emmanuel, while a policeman was shot.

Also on Tuesday evening, gunmen stormed the Akure-Owo Road in Owo Local Government Area of Ondo State and abducted workers of Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo (RUGIPO) and the Federal Medical Centre (FMC) in the town. A resident of Esa-Oke, Adewale Ogunsakin, said the Osun State College of Technology worker was going home after work when he was killed. The resident said the gunmen also beheaded another indigene of the town. Also the Public Relations of the institution, Prince Wale Oyekanmi, said six staff of the college were still missing.

He gave their names as Mr. Olaleye Olalekan (Business Administration Department), Engr. Adeyeoluwa Bankole (HOD, Civil Engineering), Dr. Jesuola Ajibola (Director, Ventures), Adenreti Chukwu (Secretary, Civil Engineering Department), Rachael Onyinocha Akinboboye (OSCOTECH Microfinance Bank) and a yet-to-be-identified person.

Many residents of the town had fled their homes to neighbouring towns to seek refuge. Investigation in the town yesterday showed that traditional hunters and vigilantes met and resolved to tackle the herdsmen if security agents do not respond swiftly. It was learnt that the hunters and the vigilantes have been on the trail of the herdsmen since Tuesday.

The traditional ruler of the town, the Owamiran of Esa-Oke, Oba Adeyemi Adediran, said the Oodua People's Congress (OPC)

members, local hunters and vigilantes had gone after the herders. Adediran, who said four of those abducted had been rescued, assured his subjects that all efforts would be made to protect their lives and property.

The traditional ruler also called on the OPC leader, who doubles as the Aare Onakakanfo of Yoruba Land, Chief Gani Adams, to rise up and defend his people. According to him, the battle is not for the Esa-Oke indigenes alone but that of the Yoruba as a whole. He described the attack as callous and wicked and called on the security agents to swing into action to bring the perpetrators to book.

Palace sources, however, said that before the OPC and the hunters could rescue the four people, they engaged the herdsmen in a fierce gun battle. According to them, in the process, the abductors ran away and left the four persons.

The sources, therefore, expressed optimism that, soon, those who were yet to be rescued would regain their freedom. The residents, however, threatened to avenge the killing of their sons and vowed that the perpetrators would not go scot-free.

Meanwhile, all the roads leading to the town have been barricaded by youths who frisked passers-by, motorists and other road users. At press time, the town had been deserted while students of the state College of Technology had also fled the campus for fear of being molested. But a top police officer, who preferred anonymity, said officers and men had been despatched to the troubled zone.

The state Commissioner of Police, Mr. Fimihan Adeoye, confirmed the attack in a telephone interview. Adeoye said his men were on the trail of the attackers and promised that the police would get to the

root of the matter. The commissioner, who confirmed the killing, also said one of his men was shot.

He said the policeman was presently receiving treatment in the hospital. Meanwhile, apart from those kidnapped on Akure-Owo Road, several passengers and residents of Amurin in Owo Local Government Area, where the incident occurred, were injured when they tried to escape from the scene of the incident.

A witness said the kidnappers, numbering about 20 and armed with AK47 rifles and other dangerous weapons, waylaid vehicles coming from Owo and started kidnapping passengers in any of the vehicles who caught their fancy. The kidnappers, who the witness said were of Fulani extraction, abducted a nonteaching member of staff of RUGIPO, Mr. Taiwo Akinyemi, from an official car and some medical staff from FMC who were on their way to Akure after the day's job.

According to him, the suspected kidnappers took over the expressway and were shooting sporadically into the air. He said many people had to run into the bush to escape from the hail of bullets. The witness said it was in the process that the polytechnic staff member and an unspecified number of FMC staff were dragged into the bush by the suspected kidnappers.

He said the kidnappers, who were operating between Owo and Ikare when the road was bad, might have relocated to Owo-Akure Road when the state government started palliative works in the Ondo North axis which had become death trap and kidnappers' den. The witness added that the police came to the scene shortly after the incident while the staff of the FMC, Owo, brought ambulance in order to attend to the injured people along the ever busy road.

However, an official of the FMC, Owo, told journalists that three of the hospital's workers were abducted on the Owo- Akure Road. He said the kidnappers had contacted family members of the victims to raise N100 million as ransom before they would secure the release of the victims.

The state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Mr. Femi Joseph, confirmed the kidnapping incident. He, however, said only two staff of the state-owned polytechnic and FMC, Owo, were abducted.

Joseph said the armed men trooped to the road under the pretence of being armed robbers, shot sporadically into the air and abducted their victims. He said the state Police Command had moved into the zone in order to secure the release of the victims and arrest the hoodlums.