

SouthEast FOCUS

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Akpoha community, Afikpo North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, a volatile area was calm before, but the people of the area are now living in fear of the unknown. **UCHENNA INYA**, in Abakaliki, reports on the killing of three persons and burning of many houses in the small community by cultists last Sunday

When sorrow visited Akpoha

Akpoha, Ohaukwu, Ezza North, Ezza South, Afikpo North and South in Ebonyi State are known for cult clashes. Cultists usually clash in these areas all the time with people killed.

But the ones that seem to be the worst of the clashes is the Akpoha clashes in which people were not only killed but over 10 beautiful houses razed when two rival cult groups in the area clashed on Sunday April 28.

About 13 persons have not been seen since the clash occurred, raising more fears and tension in community.

The clash, according to New Telegraph investigation, saw three persons losing their lives. One Eze Ikpor, 18, and Ogbo Enya Ukpai, 27 years old were among the three persons while another person whose identity was yet to be ascertained is in coma in an disclosed hospital.

The body of a yet to be identified person was found by a river side after the clash. About four persons were seriously injured.

The two prominent rival cult groups had engaged in bloody clash, killing and burning houses worth millions of naira according to some residents of the community, who spoke to our correspondent.

But the state Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Loveth Odah, said it was the residents of the area that burnt down houses of suspected cultists in the community. She also said only one person was killed, adding that five persons have been arrested in connection with the incident.

She said: "On the 28th day of April, 2019, there were cult related activities at Akpoha by 10 pm. The cult clash claimed the life of Ogbo Enya Ukpai, aged 27, who was killed while Eze Ikpor, 18 years old, was beaten to coma.



A man killed and thrown into the stream by the cultists



Some of the houses razed by the cultists in Akpoha

"The residence of all the cult boys in that village were set ablaze by the villagers. They took laws into their hands and set houses ablaze, some houses were burnt.

"The DPO of Afikpo Division said he led a patrol team and SARS and moved into the village. Now, they were able to calm the situation and as I am talking to you, five persons have been arrested in connection with the incident.

"We have not just communal crises but also cult related activities in Ebonyi State. Everywhere you go in the state, you see everybody practicing cultism. What is happening? What is the benefit of a person practicing cultism?"

A resident of the area, Mrs. Uchechukwu Idam, said: "The cultists killed rival members and set ablaze the houses of those who they couldn't meet at home to unleash their mayhem while poor residents scammed for their safety. No villager took laws into his/her hands and burnt any brother's houses but the cultists."

Another resident of the area, Christian Ite, alleged that about 13 persons from the community have been missing since the incident occurred and the area has been deserted following alleged massive arrest by the police.

He said: "The houses burnt by the cultists are not their own houses. They are innocent people's houses. The houses burnt

belonged to some persons in the community who criticize activities of the cultists and the houses are very expensive.

"Any evil done by a man to another man must be redressed, if not by man, but certainly by God; if not now, but certainly later; for the triumph of evil over good can only be temporary.

"In other words, those who are sponsoring cultism in our society, those who planted this evil seed called cultism in Akpoha, and the foolish youths who allow themselves to be used as agents of destruction of lives which they cannot create, as well as destruction of people's property and burning down of people's houses in the name of demonstrating their hopelessness and cruelty, which their grandmasters and sponsors have since years ago implanted in their minds, should realize that those who live by the sword shall die by the sword.

"While the evil they are doing will continue to live with them, the fruits of the evil seeds they have planted in our society, all in the name of using cultists to actualize their selfish gains.

"What do you gain from terminating your fellow human being's life? What do you gain from burning people's houses? What do you gain from molesting people and creating an aura of unending phobia and threat in their lives? Why do you allow yourselves to

be used by men who can only give you beer and humps as the only rewards you can gain from doing dirty works for them, while they don't have an iota of positive plans for you? Why?

"Hopeless and reprobate minded cultists who have never moulded a single block, are busy going round the village, burning down people's homes. Heartless animals who cannot fix a single hair are moving about every time, terminating people's lives. Political miscreants, whose futures have been ruined by the diabolical powers of their political masters, are going around Amogu-Akpoha, stealing people's goats, fowls and breaking into people's houses to steal their belongings. Street urchins who are living under spell, are there terrorizing people's lives. Even if you people are cursed, why can't you just work for your emancipation?"

The state government had two weeks before the clash vowed to publish the names of all identified cultists in the state, including those of public officers in the state's government.

The state Commissioner for Information and Orientation, Sen. Emmanuel Onwe, disclosed this to journalists during a press briefing on the outcome of the State Executive Council meeting.

He said the decision was Governor Dave Umahi's resolve.

Onwe said that the governor did not have to be in power for long for people to know that he was a man of total resolve.

"He is a man that does whatever he says. He will do as intelligence reports reveal that cult membership in the state cuts across students, lecturers and public officers, including those in the state's government employ.

"The government has a comprehensive list of cultists in the state and it will be published in the coming weeks."

Onwe said that organisations which morphed into cultism like the Pirates confraternity were not connected with viciousness or violence.

"They propagated unity of purpose to advance the just cause of students.

"The cultists in contrast are known only for vampire-like spilling of innocent blood and Ebonyi will no longer tolerate such acts," he said.

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