

Bloody Oro festival: 10 rival cultists killed in Lagos



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By



...residents flee Imota as gang war rages

Annual Oro festival in Imota Local Council Development Area of Lagos Stated turned bloody at the weekend as suspected members of rival cult groups engaged in a shootout living 10 people dead. Apart from the 10 members of the cult groups who died during the festival, several others sustained bullet and machete cut wounds as guns, cutlasses, bottles and charms were freely used. It was learnt that the members of Aiye took advantage of the festival to attack members of Eiye. The attack started near the Imota roundabout, while Eiye members later went on a reprisal. Witnesses alleged that the first death was recorded at Imota roundabout when members of Aiye hacked down a suspected member of Eiye, identified as Taofee. It was learnt that Taofee was on his way to in Ikorodu before the festival started. His killing sparked off the reprisal at Imota. A witness, who simply gave his name as Adeolu, said the fight started on Saturday night and spilled over to Sunday and Monday. But by the time police came in to restore normalcy in the area, about seven persons have lost their lives at Imota, Adeolu said this followed a clash between Aiye and Eiye cult groups in the community. Members of Aiye seized the opportunity of the annual Oro festival to strike. Retaliation was then staged by the Eiye group and three other persons were also killed at different locations in the town. It was learnt that the attack and counter-attack led to panic in Imota and its environs as the residents scamped for safety. Imota and its neighbouring communities like Adamo, Araromi, Isiu, Emuren, Igode were said to have been under the siege of the cultists in the last five years. New Telegraph also learnt that before this present Oro festival, non-indigenes of Imota had been warned to stay off the area between August 24 and August 27, as a result of the annual Oro festival. No fewer than 30 suspected cultists were reportedly arrested by the police for their alleged involvement in the killing of members of the Eiye and Aiye confraternities during the supremacy fight in the Imota area. It was learnt that while the Oro festival was going on in the town, a disagreement broke out between the cultists and the ensuing fight resulted in the death of 10 people between Saturday and Monday morning. The state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Bala Elkana, said more suspects had been arrested in connection with the incident. Elkana said bodies recovered from the scene of the attacks had been deposited in the Ikorodu General Hospital's mortuary for autopsy. He said: "On August 31, 2019, cult clashes between the Eiye and Aiye confraternities occurred while the Imota traditional Oro festival was going on. "Two Eiye and two Aiye cultists were killed during the clashes. We have recovered and deposited their corpses in the Ikorodu General

Hospital's mortuary for autopsy. "Thirty suspects had been arrested; two locally-made pistols, two live cartridges, three expended cartridges, 11 assorted stolen phones, charms and sizeable quantity of Indian hemp were recovered. "Intensive patrol and 'stop-and-search' operations are still being sustained. The case will be transferred to the State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department (SCIID), Panti, Yaba, after preliminary investigation. A resident of the area, Mr. Johnson Shotobi, said the attacks occurred in four different locations. Shotobi added that the cultists used guns and machetes to perpetrate the crime. He said that the cultists' activities were creating tension in Imota. According to him, residents have resorted to moving out of the community for their safety and security. He said: "It was a little misunderstanding between the cultists that led to the attacks, which resulted in the death of four persons. About 2p.m. on Saturday, at Arowolo bus stop, in Imota, an Eiye member, Femi, was cut to death with machetes. The cultists cut off his right hand. "About 5p.m. on the same day, an Aiye member, Sheriff Sanni, was also shot dead in his house opposite the Imota Police Station. I heard that his wife just gave birth. "The third person went to eat and was on his way home when the cultists shot him to death. About 6p.m., the fourth cultist, Lukman aka Slanter, was shot in the stomach at the roundabout. These cultists have been terrorising us in Imota and a lot of residents have moved out of this place. We want the government to come to our aid. "The leader of the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) in Imota, who gave his name simply as Ojuelegba, said since the clash started, his members had been assisting in arresting the cultists and handing them over to the police. He said: "Even before the festival, the rival cult groups have been attacking each other at will. As a result of their activities, many residents of the community have moved out for fear of being killed. Some parents have also relocated their young boys for the fear of being initiated into the cult group. Unfortunately, the majority of the cult boys don't reside in the community. "Between Sunday and Monday, we arrested a lot of the cult boys and handed them over to the police. The Area Commander and the divisional police station also arrested some of the bad boys. In fact, it was a joint effort. "I want to urge the Lagos State government to focus more attention on Ikorodu and its environs, because the issue of cultism is going out of hands. Even secondary school students, artisans are joining the cult groups." A reliable police source quoted the state Commissioner of Police, Muazu Zubairu, as saying that in the last two months about 300 suspected cultists had been arrested in Ikorodu and its environs.