

Police keep mum as death toll in Edo cult war rises

• Corpse of victims litter streets, as families mourn

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BENIN

Apprehension has continued to envelop residents and parents in Benin, the Edo State capital and its environs, following the weeklong bloody killings that have left an estimated 28 persons dead across the state.

This is as reports Saturday indicated that the Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) who was the Area Commander in charge of Benin City (names withheld) has died.

An unconfirmed source said the ACP died yesterday in an undisclosed hospital in the state.

The senior officer of the force and two other policemen were allegedly shot by one of the rampaging rival cult groups on sighting his team while on rescue mission along the troubled Upper Sakpoba and Murtala Mohammed Way areas of the capital town on Thursday from where they were rushed to hospital for urgent medical treatment.

Bodies of victims of the renewed bloody rival secret cult war Saturday littered various major roads and streets of Benin City, an ugly situation that has thrown most families and homes into sudden mourning.

Between Friday and yesterday (Saturday this week), 10 more victims have been mowed down in the wake of the reprisal

attacks between members of the Aiye and another body, the Arubaga otherwise known as Vikings confraternity.

This is contrary to the earlier feelings in some quarters that the raging war is between the Aiye and Eiye confraternities.

Although, nobody has advanced reasons for the ongoing bloodletting among the two rival groups, other than what many see as mere thirst for blood and supremacy battle.

About 18 persons have been gunned down at different locations of Benin City and adjoining towns from Monday to Friday last week, a development that led to closure of business premises, market, schools and banks along the Upper Sakpoba, Ugbekun, Murtala Mohammed Way and Idogbo areas of the capital.

Residents within the areas have since abandoned their homes over fear of being targets of the blood thirst rival groups.

Our Correspondent who went around the town Saturday discovered bodies of victims of the Friday and Saturday's early morning attacks were either at the center or beside the roads and streets of Ibivwe, Uselu, Siluko and Ugbowo areas of the City.

Lifeless bodies of some of the victims were seen at Abaligbe Street junction along the Benin-New Lagos road, Omoruyi Street in

Isihor community where suspected gunmen killed one Kelly Ewemade while another was shot dead in Evidence Street in Ugbowo, University town.

Also, at Oni Street junction, Off Abaligbe Street and Oghuru junction, Iguosa along Benin-Lagos expressway two other bodies were discovered after the hoodlums struck in the areas.

In addition, a young boy in his teens was shot along Siluko road while another was hacked to death at Uselu area as residents and passersby gathered to behold the ugly scenes of the attacks.

A distraught father of one of the victims, Mr. Etinosa Osifo who could not hold back his tears as he said: "I was in the house yesterday (Friday) when two boys came and called out my son; before we know what was they had killed him. That was how we saw it. I don't know whom to meet for help over my pains and predicament now. He is gone."

On Thursday last week, an Assistant Commissioner of Police, who had served as an Area Commander in Benin, two other policemen (an Inspector and Corporal) were shot while trying to bring the tensed situation under control while 15 others died during the exchange of gunfire between the cultists even as others sustained injuries in the process.