

# Crime

## How cultists killed 20 rivals in clashes within a month in Edo

Francis Ogbaugu

No fewer than 20 suspected cultists have been killed in the past one month in Benin City, the Edo State Capital.

The clash between two rival confraternities escalated tension in the state capital and other parts of the state.

It was gathered that the clash which started in October left at least 10 suspected cultists killed and several others injured.

It was learnt also that the clash snowballed into the month of November where another 10 members of each group died during clashes in Upper Sakponba, Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area of the state capital.

### Genesis

Cultism was said to have reduced in the state after the creation of Edo State Security Network (ESSN), as the various cult groups could not operate because of the visibility of the security group in the state, but it was learnt however that when the group was disbanded, they used the opportunity of their disbandment to launch fresh attacks.

The security group was disbanded by the Inspector General of Police, IGP Kayode Egbetokun, during the September 21, 2024 governorship election in the state.

However, a week after the election, the centre couldn't hold again for the heartbeat of the nation as the various confraternities went on rampage, attacking and killing each other.

The security group had over 6,500 personnel, it was alleged that some of the personnel were members of various confraternities before they were enlisted into the security group, but after the disbandment some of them didn't return the guns with them.

Those who were still with the guns and also belong to the various cult groups escalated the crisis in the state after their disbandment.

### Victims

It was gathered that on Tuesday, October 29, ten suspected cultists were killed in parts of Benin City during a clash across the city and the clash was between Eiyee and the Vikings.

A source told our correspondent that the killing continued and later snowballed to Friday November 1, when a young man, whose identity is not yet known, was shot multiple times at Nomayo bus stop, at about 6pm, as he was accosted in the area.

The source added that the assailants trailed the victim on bike to the scene where he came to get some beverages at a grocery shop in the area and shot him dead.



Suspected cultists



CP Umoru Uzigi

"Before him, about nine others had been killed in different parts of the city in October. The victim was about to enter the grocery shop when he was blocked by the rival Vikings group members, when he was shot he tried to escape, but they ran after him and shot him again on the stomach.

"Immediately the gunshot rent the air, residents started running for their lives to avoid being hit by stray bullets."

Another victim who was in his mid-thirties identified simply as Ik who hails from River State, a manager of a petrol station who also sells lubricants was shot dead by Eiyee cult group.

It was gathered that his death was a retaliation to the killing of Eiyee member by Vikings group, Ik's corpse was shattered on the ground after he was killed by the cult group.

He was killed on Saturday, November 2, in front of his work place. His killers were said to have dressed in black and put on mask, while Ik too was also said to have put on black.

Mustapha who is a co-worker with Ik said that on Saturday morning Ik told him he couldn't go to work on the fateful day that he was killed, but mustapha told him to take his drugs and rest, instead he dressed up that he was going to the shop.

"He told me someone was looking for him at the petrol station, that those who came to look for him wore mask, instead of him to run, he went back home and put on black and returned to the station, that was how he was gunned down."

### Group

As a result of the tension created by the cult clashes in parts of the state, an Edo State based Social Cultural Organisation, Aigbe Edo Progressive Alliance (APA), has appealed to the Inspector General of Police, IGP Kayode Egbetokun, to lift the ban placed on the state local vigilante group.

The president of the group, Carl Otokiti, said the vigilance group compliments the efforts of the police and other sister agencies in the state to check activities of the cultists.

"We are appealing to the youths in Edo State to shun cultism which has led many of them to early death especially the promising young ones. The activities of cultists also scare some potential investors away from the state and lead to destruction of properties and lives during clashes.

"We are appealing to the IGP to immediately and unconditionally lift the ban on the security group for peace to be restored in Benin and other parts of the state."

### Appeal

Meanwhile, the Benin United Forum (BUF), another social cultural group has called on the Oba of Benin to invoke curse on those involved in cult related activities and killings like he did when human trafficking assumed embarrassing dimension in the kingdom.

The president of the group, Iyamu Osaro said, "we are humbly appealing to our father to direct our Ohens (Chief Priests), across Benin Kingdom to immediately place a curse on those who are hiding under cultism to kill each other."

"We want the Chief Priests to go to places like Sakponba area, Egor, Uwelu, Ugbowo, Uselu and part of the

government reserve area where most of the killings take place. We are tired of innocent people's blood being shed on daily basis due to the nonsense killing by cultist."

### Security expert

A security expert, Mr. Femi Adeniji, reacting to trending issues of cultism said they pose significant societal challenges, often exploiting vulnerable individuals into their folds.

Adeniji said that cultists thrive on indoctrination, especially among children who absorb the cult's worldview without critical examination. Cult leaders also exhibit narcissistic traits, manipulating followers to surrender their autonomy and critical thinking to them.

He said: "Economy and social frustration often drive individuals, particularly students, to join cult, believing they offer solution to their problems. Despite various eradication efforts, cults still persist due to societal decay."

"Lack of parental guidance and influential adult role model, addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that emphasises education and community support."

"To prevent children from cult indoctrination, we should educate our children about influence and teach them about healthy influence, create a safe environment for our children. Also monitor external influence on them by being vigilant about who interact with our children and what message they receive, especially from friends."

### Police

When contacted, the Edo State Police Command Public Relations Officer (PPRO), SP Moses Yamu, said, "I know about the two recent ones as you have mentioned."

He however said, "That is all I know, but we are making efforts to get rid of cultism in the state and other crime related activities, especially in Benin City."

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