

Gunmen burn 20 trucks in Okigwe, kill six travellers

Chaos erupted across Imo State on Thursday as gunmen suspected to be members of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) set ablaze 20 heavy-duty trucks in Okigwe and Onuimo Local Government Areas, killing at least six persons.

In a separate attack, suspected Fulani herdsmen ambushed travellers along the Aba-Owerri road, killing a driver and abducting 22 passengers barely 24 hours before the Okigwe attack.

The assailants in the Okigwe attack, who were enforcing a sit-at-home order to mark IPOB leader, Nnamdi Kanu's court appearance, targeted trucks transporting goods, industrial materials, and laterite, reducing them

to ashes. Eyewitnesses reported scenes of pandemonium as residents and travellers scampered for safety.

"They came with guns, shooting sporadically before setting the trucks on fire," a fleeing trader said.

"People ran in all directions. No one was safe. At the end of the mayhem, six person laid dead in the pool of their own blood."

Meanwhile, in Ngor Okpala LGA, armed herdsmen blocked the Aba-Owerri highway, killing a commercial driver and whisking away 22 passengers into the bush. The abduction marks the second of such attack on the route in a month, raising fears of worsening security situation in that major exit route to from Imo to Abia

State.

Residents, however, expressed dismay over the absence of prompt security response to distress calls during both attacks.

"Where are the police? Where is the army?" a community leader in Okigwe fumed. "The government keeps telling us to ignore sit-at-home but they offer no protection."

Critics blasted Governor Hope Uzodinma for attending a political event in Anambra while his state burned.

"People are being slaughtered. Yet, our governor is busy playing politics elsewhere," a civil rights activist said. "This is a disgrace!"

In a joint statement, seven civil society groups led by

Rule of Law and Accountability Advocacy Centre (RULAAC) accused security agencies of ignoring herdsmen violence while aggressively targeting IPOB/ESN operatives.

"Communities face daily attacks. Yet, security forces look the other way," the coalition stated, listing recent herdsmen assaults in Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, and Enugu. They demanded immediate arrests, demilitarisation of civilian spaces, and a regional security summit.

As at press time, neither the Imo State Government nor federal security agencies had issued an official statement on the twin attacks with businesses and residents apprehensive of possible escalation.