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UNIPOINT Four: 21 in Police Custody

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UNIPOINT Four

Yemi Akinsuyi

Police yesterday said 21 persons, including Alhaji Hassan Welewa, the traditional ruler of Omukiri-Aluu in Ikwerre local government area of Rivers State have been taken into custody following the extra-judicial killing of four students of University of Port Harcourt.

The students were killed in the early hours of October 5, based on alleged distress call that some armed robbers were arrested in the community.

Deputy Force Public Relations Officer, CSP Frank Mba, who made the disclosure in Abuja, gave the names of the other persons as Felemo Solomon; Cynthia Chinwo; Ozioma Abajuo and Chigozie Samuel Evans as well as some members of the vigilante group operating in the area.

Mba noted that though the police took the matter to court, it was not to forestall proper investigation into the matter, but to douse tension, stressing that if better information and facts were discovered by the police in the course of investigations, they will amend the charges already pressed against the people standing trial.

According to him, due to the volatile nature of the incident, the patrol team of four Policemen from Isiokpo Divisional Police Headquarters who were dispatched to the area, a distance of about 10 kilometers, had to ask for reinforcement because “attempt made by the Police Patrol Team to take over the suspects were met with stiff opposition from the mob who chased the team with stones.

“Consequently, the Patrol Team called for reinforcements, but unfortunately, upon the arrival of the reinforcements, the alleged armed robbery suspects have been stoned and

burnt to death, while the mob immediately took to their heels.

“The corpses were recovered by the Police who by then have been joined by members of the Joint Task Force (JTF). The victims were later identified to be students of University of Port Harcourt”.

The victims were: Ugunna Obuzor (18), 200 Level Geology student; Lloyd Toku (19), 200 Level Civil Engineering student; Tekena Elkanah (20), a Diploma Technical student and Chiadaka Odinga (20), 200 Level Theatre Arts student.

The Police spokesman explained that based on information and outcome of preliminary investigations, “Alhaji Hassan Welewa, the Traditional Ruler of Omukiri Community, Aluu where the heinous incident took place and others, some of who are members of the vigilante group of the community were arrested.

“Intelligence report implicated Alhaji Hassan Welewa, as being the person who incited the mob to unleash terror on the victims.

“Findings have revealed that the victims had gone to the area where they met their unfortunate death earlier that morning to demand for money allegedly owed to them by Coxson Lelebori Lucky, alias ‘Bright’, who raised a false alarm that the victims were armed robbers.

“Although, Coxson has gone underground, Police Detectives are on his trail and efforts

have been intensified to track down others who are involved in the incident”.

He stated that even as normalcy has been restored in the area, the situation in the area, especially in the University and other tertiary institutions are being closely monitored with a view to forestalling any untoward reactions.

Mba added that “efforts are being intensified to establish the motive(s) behind this crime, arrest all who may be directly or indirectly connected with the crime and eventually bring all indicted persons to book”.

He appealed to Nigerians to see it as their civic obligation in the fight against crime and criminality, to assist security agencies in the discharge of their responsibility by providing them with evidence-based and truthful information.

Said he: “Security is everybody’s responsibility and so, should not be abandoned in the hands of security agencies alone. The maximum cooperation of the public is needed to ensure that Nigeria is safe for all.

“Nigerians are further reminded to avoid taking laws into their hands, as two wrongs can never make a right. More so, it is criminal and against the laws of the land and those that do so will surely be made to face the full wrath of the law.

“In addition, the IGP appeals to citizens who might have information torching on this and

other on-going Police investigation not to hesitate in turning over such information to the Nigeria Police Force by calling him, sending sms or sending information through his e-mail address”.

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