

48 Hours after Soludo, Nnamdi Kanu Meeting, Gunmen Strike in Anambra

- *Arsonists raze LG secretariat, courts, EEDC office, kidnap lawmaker*
- *Engage military in all-night shootout, police kill enforcers of sit-at-home*

David-Chyddy Eleke in Awka

Despite the visit of Anambra State governor, Prof Chukwuma Soludo to the leader of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Mazi Nnamdi Kanu in the detention facility of the Directorate of State Services (DSS) last Friday, insecurity has persisted in the state.

Soludo who visited Kanu, had in a social media post he made, stated

that the IPOB leader was unhappy with the insecurity pervading the South-east.

While many thought the visit would make some elements perpetrating insecurity in the region, especially Anambra to soft pedal, THISDAY findings showed that just two days after the visit, the number of cases of insecurity in the state has increased.

Last Saturday, Sunday and

yesterday, attacks on innocent Anambra people were registered, with a local government secretariat, office of the Enugu Electricity Distribution Company (EEDC) and courts torched.

On Sunday, suspected arsonists burnt down Idemili North Local Government secretariat located at Ogidi and a Magistrate Court in the area too.

Sources said the arsonists entered

the premises on Sunday night to perpetuate the act, burning down all files, properties in the secretariat, including the secretariat building.

The videos and pictures circulating online also showed that the entire buildings were reduced to rubbles, while vehicles parked inside the local government secretariat were also burnt to ashes.

The state police command confirmed the development, at-

tributing it to unidentified arsonists.

Also, unidentified gunmen same Sunday night allegedly engaged military men in a shoot-out at 3-3 estate, Nkwelle Ezumaka, near Onitsha.

Sources said the shooting which started at about 10pm lasted late into the night, with bullets flying in the air, while expended shells dropped on roofs of residents in torrents.

It was gathered that the shootout started after the unidentified rifle-wielding men took battle to the door step of the military, in a spot where they were stationed, within the estate.

A resident of the area who spoke to THISDAY on condition of anonymity, said they were scared stiff all through the night as sounds of gunshot rent the air.

She said: "It is true. Yesterday night at housing estate gate, unknown gun men attacked the military men securing us. There was three hours open fire. My estate was hot from 10pm - 12am last night. Call your colleagues living at Onitsha to confirm."

It was learnt that the gunmen also visited the Government Reserved Area (GRA) in Onitsha, where they also shot intermittently.

At Amansea, a border town between Anambra and Enugu State, gunmen numbering about seven and wearing hoods yesterday mounted guard to enforce compliance of the sit-at-home order.

A man, Mr. Ekene, who drove his sick mother from Oji River, a border town on the Enugu flank to Awka to meet up with a doctor's

appointment told THISDAY that he was saved by sight of his mother, who was lying on the back seat.

"About seven of them were on the road, but when I told them I was taking my sick mother to the hospital, they allowed me to go," the man said.

Also, on Sunday evening, Mr. Okechukwu Okoye, a lawmaker representing Aguata Constituency 1 in the State House of Assembly was kidnapped.

Okoye is an indigene of Isuofia, same community with Soludo.

The Police Public Relations Officer of the command, DSP Tochukwu Ikenga, who confirmed the kidnap while speaking with journalists, said the lawmaker's black Sierra bus, which he was driving before the incident, had been recovered.

Most other incidences of insecurity listed above were also confirmed by Ikenga, who disclosed that two persons said to be enforcing compliance to the Monday sit at home were yesterday gunned down by police operatives.

Ikenga said: "Operatives on crime prevention patrol in the early hours of today 16/5/2022 along Umunze road, Orumba South LGA, engaged arm bearing gunmen allegedly enforcing sit-at-home in Anambra State."

The operatives neutralised two of the miscreants and recovered a white Toyota Hiace Bus with no registration number.

Ikenga further stated that the miscreants were obstructing the movement of innocent road users going for their businesses, when they were accosted by the operatives.

Editors Reaffirm Commitment to Defence of Democracy, Press Freedom

- *Round off town hall meeting/capacity building training for 350 journalists*
- *Commend US Embassy for huge support*

The Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE) has concluded its Town Hall Meeting/Capacity Building Conference in six geo-political zones, during the week - with the last one in Port Harcourt, the South-South zone.

According to a statement, the journalists resolved not to buckle under any circumstances in its historic duty in defending and promoting the cause of democracy and press freedom in the country.

The NGE said having contributed immensely to the sustenance of democracy in the country, including putting the lives of many of its members on the line - via constant harassment, brutalisation and death, its members are now more equipped and energised by

elections in order to ensure that the electorate are provided with credible information to make informed choices in the democratic process.

"Editors have resolved to assist in ensuring that frivolous and unserious candidates, as well as those who have not demonstrated any capacity for leadership, are weeded out from the race."

"That ahead of the 2023 general election, editors should engage more with other stakeholders like civil society groups, the Independent National Electoral Commission, security agencies and others in deepening the democratic process."

"The editors should also ensure that the parties and their candidates

of the country, many years of democratic rule have not brought significant development in different sectors to meaningfully impact on the lives of the Nigerian people. But the media will not give up in the its defence of democracy," the editors added.

Amidst increasing misinformation, disinformation and deliberate falsehood in cyberspace, the editors also resolved to explore the use of fact-checking tools to verify stories as part of the process of erasing the credibility gap.

According to the editors, "There is need for the media to always use fact check tools to verify its stories. And that no matter how reliable a source has been in the past, the media should always be

zeal to hamstring the Nigerian media - to solely regulate the media, will be harmful to its survival."

"This is more so given its insidious use of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) codes to clamp down on stations that give vent to anti-government opinions."

"Editors agreed that the media should endeavour to regulate professional practice and also ensure proper corporate governance on the part of the owners of media houses, in order to guarantee adequate supply of working tools, better working environment and improvement in staff welfare," the editors further added in the statement.