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20 feared killed by gunmen in P-Harcourt

By Jimitota Onoyume

Posted to the Web: Tuesday, July 03, 2007

PORT HARCOURT — NO fewer than 20 persons lost their lives Sunday night in Port Harcourt when gunmen took over major streets, shooting sporadically. The cause of their action was still unclear at press time.

The shooting started from Water lines, an area where most travellers from the state capital board vehicles. There was panic while the shooting lasted. Sources said several persons sustained gun shot wounds.

The shooting later spread to Diobu area where scores of people reportedly lost their lives. At Njemanze, about six persons were feared killed, including a little girl said to be assisting her mother to sell roasted corn by the roadside. At Emenike, a lady was shot dead in her Mercedes Benz car, and just some metres away from where her car was parked another corpse laid dead on the ground.

On Abakelike road, a pregnant woman was reportedly killed by stray bullets in a church where she had gone to worship. Another lady in Okija Street allegedly died on her way to buy drugs at a nearby chemist shop.

At press time, the death toll could not be ascertained because some families told Vanguard that they were still searching for some of their relatives. The shooting which started at about 6.45 p.m. lasted about three hours.

Families lucky to be indoors locked themselves. Market that springs up by the roadside in Mile One every evening hurriedly packed up with traders and buyers fleeing in all directions. As at 730 p.m., the Mile One— Mile Three part of the busy Ikwerre road was free of traffic. The few motorists around the Mile One part of the road were forced to go through Okija Street and other adjourning streets as the Police at their Mile One station blocked the road to traffic.

Passengers were left stranded as commercial buses and taxis were not

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in sight.

“My brother, we don’t pray to have that kind of night in the state again. As I talk to you now the number of people that died is still not known. At Njemanze alone, about six persons died. It was a very black night for many homes,” an eyewitness said.

Confirming the incident to Vanguard, the state Police Commissioner, Mr. Felix Ogbaudu, said about seven corpses were recovered Sunday evening and more corpses were recovered yesterday morning. He said the Police were yet to ascertain the total number of those killed, saying investigation was on to unearth the reason behind the action of the assailants.

“We don’t know the total number of deaths so far. Yesterday (Sunday), my men recovered seven. And I was told they got more today (Monday). I am at Abuja now. When I get more information I will get across to you,” the Police Commissioner said on phone.

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