

# 9 killed as P-Harcourt cult battle rages

By George Onah

**P**ORT HARCOURT—THE death toll in the midnight cult-related killings in Ogbunabali community, Obio/Akpor Council, Rivers State, has risen to nine, up from five last week. *Vanguard* investigation has revealed.

Although there were conflicting stories on the number so far killed in the area, with some saying 15 people have been murdered, while others put the figure at between nine and eleven, a community leader who did not want his name in print put the deaths at nine.

When *Vanguard* called the Police PRO, Rita Inomabey, for confirmation, a voice answered her phone saying "she is attending a crucial meeting with the Commissioner (of Police) and other officers. She has been in the meeting since morning."

The apparent reprisal murders were traceable to the killing of an alleged cultist by a rival cult gang in the community last week, following

which his soul-mates vowed to avenge the death of their colleague with as many deaths as possible.

Witnesses said the nocturnal brigands were usually armed with short axes, with which they attack their targets in the dead of night, dealing several blows of the weapon on their victims and walking away unchallenged.

According to the witnesses, the exercise commences at past midnight when residents of the usually bubbling community would have retired to their homes.

The situation, it was learnt,

is sometimes aided by the perennial power outage in the area.

Nothing is usually taking away from the homes of the slain people, a situation which erases any theory of robbery in the operation of the axe-wielding night killers, heightening the fear of an outbreak of large scale cult clash.

Police sources, however, said security has been improved in the area, just as the youths and elders of the community have assembled vigilante groups to counter the menace of the marauders.

## Benin monarch wades into E ...declares Aladenika's suspension as

By Simon Ebegbulem

**B**ENIN—THE Benin monarch, Oba Erediuwa, has waded into the crisis rocking the Edo state chapter of the Nigeria Union of Jour-

nalists (NUJ), describing the purported suspension of the state Chairman of the union, Otunba Mike Aladenika, as null and void.

Meanwhile, fresh crisis is brewing between the suspended Esama of Benin Kingdom, Chief Gabriel Igbiniedion and the Oba of Benin following the report