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Cult war in Edo!

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Cultists unleashed terror in Benin-City, Edo State last week. Some persons were killed in the process creating fear in the minds of residents. Apart from the activities of the cultists, armed robbers, kidnappers and rapists struck in the state capital but luck ran out on them when a team of mobile policemen arrested them.

By Simon Ebegbulem, Benin-City

Cultists unleashed terror in Benin-City, Edo State last week. Some persons were killed in the process creating fear in the minds of residents. Apart from the activities of the cultists, armed robbers, kidnappers and rapists struck in the state capital but luck ran out on them when a team of mobile policemen arrested them.

The state police commissioner, Folunso Adebajo, paraded the suspected armed robbers, kidnappers and cultists, numbering 36. One of the suspects confessed he was a member of the Eiye Confraternity, saying, however, that he joined the cult out of ignorance.

Another, believed to be the armourer, said he kept guns for a cult without knowing the bag with him contained the weapons. Governor Adams Oshiomhole, worried over the activities of the cultists, last week, summoned an emergency security meeting and charged security operatives to fish cultists in the state, among other criminals out.

Adebajo described the killings linked to two cults as unacceptable and vowed that the police

would deal with the situation. According to him, “We are not relaxing. We are in search of the cult leaders behind this, some persons have been arrested while some are on the run. The killings will stop because our members are all alert now. I can assure you that anybody arrested will be dealt with.

All security agencies in the state are concerned, the governor is equally concerned, residents of the state are concerned, so we will go all the way to stop this madness. It is very sad that people no longer value human lives”. The Edo CP, who paraded the

36 persons allegedly involved in kidnapping, armed robbery and cultism in the state, including the cult leaders allegedly involved in killings, said they were arrested with cache of arms, including AK47 rifle, two AK 47 rifle magazines, twenty three rounds of 7.62mm live ammunition, two horse magnum pump action guns, one English made cut to size double barrel gun and one hundred and seven live cartridges.

Adebanjo reiterated his call to cultists and other criminally-minded people to leave the state or be “crushed”, just as he solicited the cooperation of the public in giving useful information to the police. While hailing the ban on Okada in the state, the CP lamented that about 90 per cent of crimes committed in Edo were carried out on motorcycle. He explained that suspects were arrested in different parts of the state, saying that the suspected kidnappers amongst them were involved in the kidnapping of some white men and members of the Nigeria Union of Teachers and were arrested in their hideouts.

His words: “I remember that when I resumed duties here, I warned criminals to relocate or repent. Those who tried to disobey the order are some of the people you are seeing here now. The Edo Police Command is working tirelessly to make sure that the people sleep with their two eyes closed. We are

doing everything possible to make sure that the state is peaceful. The police will not relent in its efforts. This is to warn all the criminals to leave the state because we are going to continue to pursue them. As you can see, we have so many of them here, kidnappers, armed robbers, those who are involved in recent cult related killings.

We have recovered cache of arms and ammunition. We have so many cultists, murderers and armed robbers in our custody. But because investigations are ongoing, that is why they are not being paraded today. I wonder why students will resort to killing themselves, it does not make sense and they will be treated as criminals.”

On the insinuation that the ban on Okada may increase the rate of crime in the state, the CP said, “The ban on Okada is for security purpose. There will be definitely complaints here and there from people but it is the best thing for the people. Many of the crimes being committed in Oredo and other parts of Benin City are bike-related crimes. They use bike to rob people, kill people and even cultists use bike to operate. Nobody should be scared that the ban will breed more armed robbers, we are fully prepared for them.

Some of the suspects arrested confessed to Sunday Vanguard in separate interviews.

Enoma (alleged driver of a gang of kidnappers)

“My name is Enoma. I am not a kidnapper but the person whose vehicle I was driving is a kidnapper, his name is Shakira. I was somewhere when they (police) came and asked who owned the vehicle and I said it was me. That was how the police brought me here. There was a day they took me to one community; I did not know that they were in possession of guns. The man bought a car for me to drive. They kidnapped

a white man; later they gave me N550,000. Shakira and others told me to stay along Akure Road by Legbeka Road and watch any vehicle carrying a white man, that I should call them as soon as I see the white man. So when I saw one Jeep carrying a white man, I called to tell him. They now said I should go back to Benin. A few days later, they gave me N550,000”.

Udoka Simon

I have never been involved in crime but I am a cultist. The day they kidnapped three people at NUT, they only told me they were taking me to a community to go and work. But when I got there, I was surprised about what they were doing. When I wanted to leave, one of them threatened they were going to kill me as I wanted to expose them. And suddenly they brought the three NUT people they had kidnapped.

They did not collect money from them but they collected money from a Lebanese man they kidnapped along the expressway. They collected N6million from the Lebanese and gave me N320,000. My job was to look after victims in the bush and sometimes they will ask me to watch out if people were coming. I did not participate in the kidnapping and that was why I got only N320,000 out of N6m”.

Jolly Ighodaro (suspected armourer)

My friend kept a bag in my house but I did not know what was inside. I did not know it was guns, otherwise, I would have not accepted it. I am a furniture maker. I did not check the bag because he is my friend. I did not receive any money from them.

Curtis Osifo

I am a member of Eiye Confraternity. I bought a gun due to community crisis but I didn't use it to do evil. I joined the cult due to ignorance and I am regretting it. It was my friends that led me to this. I was not really involved in gun running or kidnapping”.

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