



CrimeGuard



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Trader survives Boko Haram, loses life to armed robbers

• Tension mounts as residents raise alarm over incessant attacks

BY CHINENYEH OZOR, Nsukka

A 24-year-old trader, Chinedu Eneje, who fled from the Northern part of the country in order to save his life from the onslaught of the dreaded Boko Haram insurgents, has, unfortunately, been killed by armed robbers.

He was killed a few days after returning to the warm embrace of members of his family by bandits who laid siege to the Adani/Nsukka Expressway in Enugu State.

The development has raised tension in the area following complaints of constant attacks by armed robbers on the expressway which is now like a deathtrap to all the residents of the area and travellers.

The unending robbery operations along the road have resulted in the deaths of no fewer than ten people in the last three months.

The bandits unleash mayhem on travellers at ease, without let or hindrance by security operatives or members of vigilante groups.

Investigations showed that just a week before the killing of the young man, a commuter bus conveying passengers from Adani to Nsukka was attacked and one of the passengers on board was shot dead while the driver sustained gunshot injuries on the left hand.

How the robbers attacked

Narrating how the latest incident took place, the driver of the commuter bus, who gave his name as Ifeanyi Ogba, told Crime Guard that the attack was his third experience along the road, adding that the robbers blocked the road along a sharp bend near Ikwuoka, emerged from the bush, ordered everybody to lie flat on the ground and robbed them one after the other. They also took their luggage and dashed into the bush.

"The robbers fired their guns immediately we were stopped, shot me in my left hand while a stray bullet pierced and killed the passenger seated beside me in front of the bus. He died before we could reach Bishop Shanahan Hospital, Nsukka where his corpse was deposited," he recounted.

Investigations revealed that armed robbers carry out incessant raids on the expressway. It was gathered that during such raids, they rape, maim and harass passengers and inhabitants of the area without checks by either the local vigilante or Adani Police Division that normally claim they were on top of the situation each time there was a robbery incident along the road.

Vigilante failure

Furthermore, the Chairman of Uzo-Uwani Local Government Council, which the expressway traverses, Cornell Onwubuya, had reportedly,



• IGP ARASE

at a town hall meeting of the council last year, inaugurated Police Assisted Neighbourhood Watch to join hands with the Police in patrolling the road. The initiative lasted only for some months as the vigilante group were allegedly not mobilized. Based on this, armed robbers cashed in on the near-complete lack of security to continue maiming and killing unsuspecting travellers and inhabitants of the area.

Following this development, a veteran journalist and the traditional ruler of Ukpabi/Nimbo, Igwe John Akor, has called on the Acting Inspector-General of Police, Solomon Arase, to urgently address the rising spate of deaths being recorded on the expressway with a view to saving lives and stopping permanently, the harassment and dehumanization of farmers in the area.

According to him, "Our people are known to be great farmers and we are the food basket of Enugu state and beyond. In spite of our consistent cries for the rehabilitation of the highway which was last tarred by the Obasanjo regime, we are still being subjected daily to the menace of dare-devil armed robbers. Bandits have been unleashing terror constantly on the expressway and no concrete steps have been taken to stop this ugly development. The in-coming government of Buhari should give this issue the urgent attention it rightly deserves; else they may succeed in killing all of us."

Call for security, road repairs



• Gov-Sullivan-Chime

In the same vein, a human rights activist and information and communication officer of the Legal Aid And Self-Development Initiative, LASDI, Hon, Simon Okechukwu, also called for urgent attention to be focused on the road by not only providing adequate security to man all strategic points but carrying out a total rehabilitation of the very important road that leads to food producing towns in the state.

"This will be one of the first bold and commendable steps to be taken by the Buhari regime because he assured us that he will lay emphasis on food production. Obasanjo did not waste time during his tenure in tarring the road but it has gotten so bad that a journey of barely an hour now takes up to three hours and robbers capitalize on this to operate freely there.

"At the peak of Christmas celebrations last year, bandits took over the road on the 24th and ended up killing one of our daughters coming home from Lagos. I gathered that the skeletal security we notice there is by the grace of the Police Area Command, Nsukka who, at intervals, send men to patrol the road. Even during last Monday's robbery incident in which Chinedu Eneje was shot dead, it was still the Area Commander's team that was sighted running round to deposit the corpse at the mortuary and to ensure treatment of the wounded driver," he stated.