

One dead, another shot as cultists clash in Ughelli

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UGHELLI—ONE person was yesterday confirmed dead, while another suffered gunshot wounds from cult-related attacks which occurred in different parts of Ughelli in Delta State over the weekend.

This came at a time 46 suspected cultists were arrested in the university town of Ekpoma, Edo State, by the state police command.

One of the victims, identified as Erhuvwu, also known as African Boy, was shot at the lower part of his back by a group of rival gang members opposite a popular hotel along Pipeline road on Saturday, while the second victim, simply identified as Matete, sustained serious injuries as a result of a gunshot and cuts from battle axed used on him by his assailants at Otovowodo.

Making the disclosure to *Vanguard*, a source in one of the groups stated that both attacks occurred last Saturday.

Palpable fear now grips residents of Ughelli and its environs over fear of reprisal attacks by members of the rival gang of both victims.

In recent months, Ughelli has been faced with series of kidnappings and cult-related clashes which has witnessed loss of lives among rival cult groups.

Confirming the attack on Erhuvwu, a source close to his family disclosed that he had exchanged pleasantries with his five assailants who he was well acquainted with and was leaving them when they immediately shot him from behind.

Meanwhile, Edo State police commissioner, Mrs. Chris Ezike, has said that the 46 suspected cultists arrested by the police at the university town of Ekpoma last Thursday were undergoing thorough investigation to ascertain if they were on the wanted list of the police.

The commissioner's statement came as the parents of those arrested yesterday thronged the state Police Command headquarters in Benin City to seek the release of their sons.

Ezike, who had vowed to crush cultists in the state, insisted that the "suspects have to be profiled, their photographs taken and cross-matched to know whether they are on the police wanted list before any release can be made."

A crack team of detectives raided the university town last Thursday, following the killing of four persons by suspected cultists and 46 suspected cultists were arrested, with arms.

Ezike noted that some of those arrested might be innocent, adding that that it was as a result of that the police were screening those arrested.

Earlier investigations indicated that six of the suspects who were confirmed to be innocent, had been released to their families.