

Gang war throws Lagos residents into disarray

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Policeman, seven others killed, petrol station attacked
We're no longer safe — residents

By Victor Arjiromanus

The peace and tranquility hitherto witnessed by residents of Amukoko, in the densely populated Ajegunle area of Lagos, has been replaced with fear, owing to an ongoing gang war among some youths in the area, which has already claimed 10 lives.

At the moment, helpless residents are wearing expressions of fear, sadness and uncertainty, with some shops still under lock out of fear that owners may lose their wares to the rampaging warring gangs. Some of the residents have wondered why the security agents have been unable to contain the situation.

The latest fight occurred last Tuesday, between Apasa and market street boys, with sporadic gunshots renting the air. Residents who have always been on the alert, scurried into hiding to avoid being hit by flying bullets. Text messages were sent to loved ones who were yet to return home, to remain where they were, in order not to fall into the rival warrior's crossfire.



Genesis of crisis

Investigation by Saturday Vanguard revealed that the youths of Apasa, Itire, Iyatuwo, Ishaga, market street, Mosafejo and Alaba areaa have been embroiled in a power tussle for close to two years.

It has become a reccurring event of attacks and constant killings in these areas, a situation that has deprived residents of rest and sleep at night. It was gathered that two members of the gang were brutally murdered in Alao and Itire roads in Ojo Local government Area after a roadside attack last month.

During one of the fights on December 31, 2018, three members of market street gang were allegedly killed by Apasa boys. Another attack was said to have been launched on Market boys three weeks ago, during which one of them, (market boy) was killed.

Also last Monday, market boys were said to have ambushed a member of Apasa area gang at about 6pm. The victim was reportedly shot and abandoned to die in the pool of his blood but he was however said to have survived the attack.

When news of his survival reached market boys, they reportedly launched another attack on Apasa, same week. As if that was not enough, they allegedly attacked a petrol station owned by a retired policeman, simply because it was situated within

Apasa area and reportedly made away with three motorcycles which were being refuelled by their owners as well as an unspecified amount of money.

Also during one of the attacks, residents said some armed youths stormed Ezeagu street through a local bridge popularly called 'kpako' and stopped at Alao Junction, throwing the area into disarray . They reportedly robbed people who were passing through the bridge of their belongings. Shop owners hurriedly closed up while some residents fled their homes.

When a team of policemen arrived the scene, the hoodlums fled in different directions with one of them making attempt to hide in a building. But he was resisted by a resident who claimed to be a soldier. He was lynched by an angry mob in the process with his corpse dumped beside Christ the King Catholic church, Alao bus stop, alongside another member of his gang who was also intercepted.

Residents lament constant attacks, killings

Lamenting the frequent attacks and killings by these hoodlums, a private security guard, Kabiru Oniru, said "at least seven persons have died in the last one week due to the violent attacks by these hoodlums. Two persons were killed along Alao Street, two persons at Ezeagu Street, one person in Abeje, and two in other parts of the area. A policeman was also shot to death by the gang.

"The hoodlums usually stormed rival gang's street in broad daylight, in a group of at least thirty, wielding weapons, attacking anyone at sight and dispossessing them of phones and cash. At other times, they would stop vehicles and attack the passengers without any reason. During attacks, they would chase everyone out of the street".

A local food vendor who was attacked but preferred not to disclose her identity said "at about 10am on Tuesday(two weeks ago) the hoodlums broke into my shop, where I was selling amala. They carried my cooler of Amala and soup, and as if that was not enough, they went to where I kept money and carted away everything I had made for the day".

Another victim, who gave his name as Ikechukwu, owner of a boutique along Itire road said "during reprisal attacks, shop owners are usually at the receiving end. They would break into our shops simply because they were located on the rival gang's streets. Whoever tried to resist them would have their cutlasses to contend with. Most times they would tell you to move out of the area in your own interest".

Owing to the attacks on shops and other business centres in these areas, some owners have refused to open for sale for fear of further attacks by these hoodlums. A source told Vanguard that, “businesses are crippling. How do you expect people to come out and sell when they know that they will end up being attacked and robbed? In fact, our lives are no longer safe”.

When Saturday Vanguard visited the area on Thursday, some shops were opened with their owners being on the alert.

Police raids

As at Tuesday night when a reprisal attack was launched on one of the streets, Vanguard gathered that , policemen from Divisional Police stations under Area ‘B’ Apapa, were mobilized there, with a view to arresting those behind it. But the residents claimed tht innocent persons were arrested during the raids by the Police. One of the residents, Mr Andrew Nwankwo, said “policemen would never come when the fight was going on and when they eventually came they would start arresting innocent residents who were going about their lawful business. They should go and arrest the hoodlums and their sponsors, so that peace can return to this area”.

In his reaction, the Commissioner of Police, Lagos State Police Command, Zubairu Muazu, said efforts were on to sanitise the area, adding that the command would not fold its hands and allow gang war to hold sway in the state. Muazu said he had directed the Deputy Commissioner of Police in-charge of Operations, DCP Mohammed Ali , to restore peace in the area, assuring Lagosinas that the command was on top of the situation.

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