

## Militant youths invade A-Ibom community, kill 5, injure 7

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...One dies in Edo community clash

By Harris Emanuel & Ozioruva Aliu

No fewer than five persons have allegedly been killed and seven others injured in a renewed hostilities over land between Uko Ntenghe and Uko Akpan communities in Mbo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Monday.

It was gathered that militant youths from Uko Ntenghe reportedly invaded the farmland and raped a woman who they also took hostage, while a detachment was said to have sneaked into Uko Akpan in Enwang, the headquarters and killed five persons.

An eye witness said the armed youths shot sporadically, as resident scampered for safety. They also burnt down two houses and several cars in the serene village, which is now deserted.

The whereabouts of the clan head, Obong Bassey Atabia II, is not yet known, while one of his sons is said to be among those injured by the militants.

A youth leader, Michael Etim, appealed to the state government and security agencies to help restore calm in the area.

"This is a matter of life and death. Those in the village are not safe," he lamented.

Secretary to the State Government, Dr Emmanuel Ekuwem, an indigene of the local government area, could not be reached at press time, as calls and message sent to his phone and WhatsApp were not answered.

The Police said they were on top of the situation, but the Enwang community wants reinforcement from other sister security agencies to safeguard lives and property.

Police Public Relations Officer, Odiko MacDon, said: "We are on it. Our men are on ground there."

### One dies in Edo community clash

Meanwhile, there were fear and anxiety in Igarra, Akoko-Edo Local Government Area of Edo State over the death of a young man, Ajitwewunmeshe Emmah, popularly known as Lacombe, who was said to have been killed by yet to be identified persons.

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Many shops in Ugbogbo part of Igarra did not open and a local market that holds in the heart of the area popularly called Ofua-momo, which opens once in four days, was also deserted, yesterday, because of the killing.

Vanguard gathered that there was a clash between two groups of masquerades, Monday, after the annual Ekuochi festival that led to several people sustaining injuries as they were inflicted with machetes and axes. Among the injured was the chairman, Police Community Relations Committee (PCRC), Chief Folorunsho Okomayin.

Yet, another version said the clash might not be far from the on-going clashes among rival cult groups in the state.

A member of the vigilante group in Igarra locality said: "After the annual Ekuochi festival, there is always the merriment later in the evening when several masquerades and young people come back to town to continue the celebrations.

"On Monday, there were two masquerades that were permitted to come out but a third one came and instead of the members carrying sticks, they came out with knives, axes and machetes and there was clash and several persons were injured and some hospitalised but normalcy was restored later that evening. I was shocked when we heard in the early hours of yesterday (Tuesday) that the boy was shot dead."

Vanguard gathered that a formal complaint had been laid at the Igarra Police Station and police were already investigating.

Contacted, the traditional ruler of Igarra, HRH Oba Adeche Saiki Otaru said: "It has some connection with Ekuochi and no, doubt, I believe that this issue of cultism also came into play. But this Ekuochi festival was first banned and the ban lifted after they reached some agreement to be peaceful and this is the third one.

"I think we have to go back to square one about the banning because it is an abomination for any masquerade to use its cane on an elder in the community.

"Immediately the news of the death got to me, I immediately reported to the police and the army. They are already working to ensure there is peace in the land."

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