

Villagers flee as masked gunmen invade Edo town, kill 4

****Uselu-Nahor community leaders petition police, finger 16 suspects ***I'm not guilty - Mike Enotiomwonmwan, youth leader ***We're investigating — Police*

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By Ozioruva Aliu, Uselu-Nahor

Numerous residents have taken flight from Uselu-Nahor, Uhunmwonde Local Government Area, Edo State, following invasion of the community by camouflaged gangsters, who shot dead four youths, including the head of security in the town, Osasu Idubor, last Wednesday.

The gunmen numbering five, attacked a popular location in the tension-soaked community where the victims and other youth leaders constituted by the Enogie (Duke) assembled, and unleashed mayhem.

Three (Osasu Idubor, Courage Izevbuwa and Nosa) died on the spot while others who sustained various degrees of injuries fled for their dear lives. One of the wounded died at the University of Benin Teaching Hospital, UBTH, about 24 hours after the premeditated shooting.

The targets were reportedly on their duty post at Ahor Kara, collecting duty parking fees from vehicles when the hitmen opened fire on them.

NDV learned the fleeing residents abandoned their homes and businesses to save their lives.

There have been conflicting reports on what led to the attack, but NDV gathered it was as a result of change in the youth leadership of the community and the retention of the Okaeghele (community youth leader), Mike Enotiomwonmwan, as the head. Enotiomwonmwan had allegedly refused to work with the new leadership, but he rebutted the allegation of masterminding the killings.

Youth leader threatened me –Osaze, villager

A resident who sells lubricating oil and other items, Bright Omoregie Osaze relates his experience: “I am from Uselu-Nahor community, they killed people in our community on Wednesday and since then, we have not been going there. One of the leaders had been threatening me that I allow those boys to always come to my place (near the garage) and that whatever happens, I should be prepared to live with it.

“I told one of the boys who was killed (the CSO), about the threat and I believe it was because of the community crisis that they were threatening me. I have not entered the community for about three

months because I just do my business and go home.

“On Wednesday, at about 2:22 am, one of my neighbours called me to ask what was happening around my shop and I said I do not know, he was the one who told me that he heard people have been killed. I wanted to leave the house that night, but my wife did not allow me.

“I later called somebody from the garage who confirmed to me that the one we call CSO died in his hands and that he is hiding in the bush. I eventually went there in the morning and saw the three dead bodies and as I am talking to you now, the one that was rushed to UBTH has also died.

“I want the government to investigate this matter and see what man’s inhumanity to man has caused. It is because of land that Osasu Idubor, Courage Izevbuwa, the third one who I simply know as Nosa, and the one rushed to the hospital, have died.

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“We want thorough investigation because we have cried out before now on this issue and the government said no more youth associations in communities and that okaegheles (youth leaders) should submit to Enogie which was why our Enogie dissolved the leadership that was existing. This youth leader has not been respecting the Enogie. When the Enogie sells land, he will go and sell the same land again. There are arms in our community,” he added.

Genesis of crisis – Omoregie

Speaking on how the crisis started, a cousin to the duke, Osairume Omoregie, said: “The problem has been on since the Enogie dissolved the existing youth leadership and appointed new ones but retained the okaeghele because we were told that it was a directive from the palace by the former omada to the Oba, Roland Ogbemor, who is now facing trial in court over alleged fraud.

“But we later discovered that he lied to us, he was not sent by the Oba. Since they brought him, he has been oppressing people, elders do not have a say in what happens there, so I just decided to stay away from community activities and face my business. “We were told that it was five people that came to attack them, two of them wore masks so we want police investigation into this. The palace should also intervene because they claim that it was the Oba that appointed him. We want peace in our land. He was imposed on us by Roland because he claimed he was directed by the Oba to make him okaeghele,” he asserted.

Community reacts

Leaders of the community in a petition to the Commissioner of Police through their legal representative, B.O Ojumah Esq. fingered the okaeghele and 15 others, whose arrest and prosecution they demanded.

The leaders appealed to the commissioner to expand the investigation to arrest the principal perpetrators who had been identified in the horrific killings. “We are now staying in our homes with serious fear as the killers might come back to attack and kill our children again.

“We appeal for those we mentioned their names in the petition to be arrested and charged to court for murder,” they said.

On 14 September 2021, the same culprits carried out a similar attack and went into hiding, the community claimed.

Enotiomwonmwan denies allegation

Responding to the charges, Enotiomwonmwan, who deplored the killing, said: “I am not happy over these killings that took place at Ahor Kara. It was in April, last year that I was attacked at the same place, myself and my brother. The unknown gunmen shot severally at us. My brother died immediately but I sustained injuries that I am still nursing till date.

“I was shocked when I heard I am the one who perpetrated the evil act. Let me say it now that I don’t know anything about the killings. Five of our brothers were shot, three died immediately. So how could I have attacked my own brothers?

“I am using this medium to call on the Nigeria Police and the government to help do a thorough investigation in order to unravel the killers of my brothers. I will be so glad if the killers are arrested,” he said.

Police react

Contacted, Police Public Relations Officer, PPRO, Edo State Command, Kontongs Bello, said: “Investigation is on, no arrest has been made but the police have received the petition from the community and are acting on it. If there is anything to make public, police will do so.”