

Killing of 5 over witchcraft: Police rescue 3 officers in C’River

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***15 marked for death, 5 killed, buried in the evil forest —Source**

***We’ve launched a manhunt for culprits—PPRO**

By Ike Uchechukwu. CALABAR

Three policemen abducted during surveillance to Ndon Owong community, Odukpani Local Government Area, Cross River State after five women were beaten to death over witchcraft allegations have been rescued.

It was gathered that for the intervention of the abducted policemen, 15 people were pencilled down for killing by the village youths over allegations that they were witches.

The rescue operation, Vanguard gathered, was carried out by SP Awodi Abdulhameed’s Anti Cultism and Kidnapping Squad, ACKS, and a service pistol was also recovered.

While two suspects have been arrested in connection with the abduction, the officers were severely brutalised.

A security source, who pleaded anonymity, told Vanguard that this was not the first time irate youths of the locality were holding policemen hostage in the same community.

He said after the killing of the five women, 10 were let off the hook while the other five who were killed were buried in a shallow grave in the “evil forest.”

“It was on the strength of this information that the police swung into action and invited the village head. It was when our men from the division where the incident occurred went to deliver an invitation letter that the youths of the community held the three officers hostage.

“They formed a mob and disarmed an ASP with a service pistol and started beating and cutting the trio with machetes inflicting injuries on them.

“It took the intervention of the Anti-Cultism and Kidnapping Squad to rescue the officers and also recover the service pistol and arrested two suspects. Among those arrested are Etim Effiong, 34, and Michael Etim Udoh, 32.

“They have made useful statements and we have already launched a manhunt for other fleeing suspects involved in the killing of the five women as well as those that held the three police officers hostage.”

Contacted yesterday, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Irene Ugbo, confirmed the incident, adding that they have two suspects in their custody but were already making progress in apprehending other fleeing suspects.

Ugbo said: “Nobody can take the laws into their hands, our constitution does not recognise anything like witchcraft. If they had a case they should have taken the appropriate channel to address them not taken innocent lives in cold blood.

“Five people were gruesomely murdered in cold blood and buried in a shallow grave inside the forest over what I described as unfounded allegations. It is barbaric, it is unacceptable and we will leave no stone unturned in ensuring they face the full weight of the law.”