

Gunmen kidnap 9 Enugu-bound passengers, kill 2, rob others



Gunmen operating at Imo axis of the Enugu-Port Harcourt Expressway reportedly kidnapped nine Enugu-bound passengers, killed two and robbed others of their valuables.

The victims, who hail from Amangwo Olokoro in Umuahia, were said to be travelling to Enugu on Saturday for a burial, when they were attacked by the unidentified hoodlums.

Narrating their to newsmen in Umuahia on Sunday, one of them, who identified himself simply as Francis, said their Sienna Bus was flagged down at gunpoint near the Arondizuogu Junction on the expressway.

Francis (not real name) said that the vehicle was later diverted off the expressway to Arondizuogu Road in Imo, from where they were led into a hamlet far into the bush.

He said: "I have never had this kind of experience in my life before.

"We were travelling to Enugu for a burial and when we got close to Arondizuogu Junction, we saw a group of heavily armed men and they asked us to park.

"One of us in the vehicle asked them 'why do you ask us to park and pointing your guns at us, do you know who I am?'.

"Then one of the hoodlums said, 'now oga you will prove to us whom you are'.

"They ordered us out of the vehicle and asked us to sit on the ground and pull off our shirts with which they blindfolded us.

"From there, they started beating the man that made the comment with machete," Francis said.

He said that when they got into the hamlet, residents "were watching us as if they are watching a video.

"When we alighted from the vehicle, their leader asked about the man that made the comment and they pointed at him.

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"They brought him out, and barely three steps away from us, they shot him dead.

"Another man with us, who saw what happened and attempted to escape was rushed and also shot dead," Francis said.

According to him, they seized the two corpses.

He said that the hoodlums were not fewer than 50 in their hideout, with 20 of them heavily armed.

"And the funniest part of it was that these men were speaking our own language.

"They told us that Umuahia people are 'sabo to them', that they asked us not to vote in the last election and we went out to vote.

"That they declared Mondays sit-at-home and we are not obeying them.

"That any Umuahia person they got around here will get it hot.

"Then they asked us to say our last prayers," Francis said.

He said that as they were praying, they were being moved into one of the three new Hummer Buses in the hideout and taken to where they eventually loaded them back into their Sienna Bus and led to the tarred road.

"At that point they asked whether we can find our way out and we said no and they told the driver to go straight.

"They said we should go and tell Umuahia people what we saw.

"That was how we found ourselves back to Umuahia," he said.

Francis said that valuables collected from them, included cash and cell phones.

Meanwhile, the deceased persons were identified as Chukwuemeka Nwachukwu, a pastor, who passed a comment after they were flagged down, and the Village Youth Leader, Ifeanyi Onwunkwe, who attempted to escape.

A journalist from the community said on the condition of anonymity that "the sad incident has thrown the area into mourning".

Attempt made to get a confirmation of the attack from the Imo Police Public Relations Officer, ASP Henry Okoye, was unsuccessful as phone calls made to him failed to connect.

However, a senior police officer at the Abia Police Command claimed to be aware of the incident but said that "formal entry" had yet to be made.

"I am aware of the Saturday attack but you know the incident happened in Imo

**"I am aware of the Saturday attack but you know the incident happened in Imo.
"So, as we speak, nobody has made any formal entry here," the source said.**