

3 killed in 2 attacks as gunshots rain in Owerri

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OWERRI—Rampaging hoodlums, Tuesday evening, reportedly killed three persons in two separate attacks in Imo State.

The dare-devil gunmen, who eventually escaped from the scene of the crime, equally set ablaze a government-owned waste disposal truck, kidnapped a yet-to-be-identified motorist and set his vehicle ablaze.

It was also gathered that those who were gruesomely murdered by the gunmen at Nwagwu, Mbatoli local government area and Orji, Owerri North local council area, included a policeman, a businessman from Onicha Igboeze, Ebonyi State, and the husband of the immediate past state woman leader of the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP.

There was another round of upheaval, yesterday, as gunshots rent the air, in several sections of Owerri municipality and its adjoining communities.

Vanguard check revealed that at press time, most shop owners along Douglas Road, Wetheral Road, Old Market Road, Rotobi Street, School Road, Christ Church Road and Oguamanam Street, had closed their shops and scamped for safety.

Gunshots were heard by residents of Ikenegbu Layout, Imo State University back gate, MCC/Uratta Road, Christina Road, Egbo and environs, as well as Old Nekede Road, West End, and Toronto Junction.

A resident told Vanguard: "The military chased them to Owerri/Okigwe Road, through IMSU Junction but unfortunately, they missed them (the hoodlums)."

Reacting to the situation, Imo State Police Command's Public Relations Officer, Mr. Henry Okafor, said: "The Commissioner of Police has personally led men to the scene. The command is on top of the situation. We will get the miscreants responsible for the senseless attacks either dead or alive."

"We will so deal with the miscreants responsible for the attacks and killing of security operatives and unsuspecting members of the public in such a way that they will never think of perpetrating insecurity in the state again."

Police raid ESN, IPOB camps in Anambra

Meantime, there was pandemonium in Isseke community and its environs in Ihiala Local

Government Area of Anambra State amid a gun battle between security operatives and men suspected to be members of the Eastern Security Network, ESN, the security arm of the Indigenous People of Biafra, IPOB.

The incident, which reportedly started in the early hours of Tuesday with sporadic shootings, created panic and fear as residents remained indoors and traders stayed away from markets and other public places for fear of stray bullets.

Some villagers, who summoned courage to come out of their various homes, reportedly sustained injuries before they scamped for safety.

A source and a community leader who pleaded anonymity told newsmen that the shooting incident began in the early hours of the night when some security operatives wearing masks stormed the area.

He said: "We don't know the actual reason for the shootings, but from the information I have gathered, it looks as if the security operatives are raiding some criminal hideouts in the area and you know such exercise would always come with skirmishes."

"As I speak, shootings are ongoing and people have been forced to remain indoors. We suspect it might be a shootout between those suspected to be ESN members and the security operatives. It is not yet clear if there is any casualty at the moment."

Contacted, Anambra State Police Command Public Relations Officer, SP Tochukwu Ikenga, said: "The situation is under control as clearance operations are ongoing by joint security operatives at Isseke community in Ihiala LGA. The joint security operatives raided some criminal elements and hideouts of ESN and IPOB members in the area."

23 people gunned down in Awka

In a related development, three persons were shot dead at different places in Awka, the Anambra State capital, last Monday.

This is coming after last Sunday morning shooting at Ifite, which left an unidentified Kogi State indigene, who was said to be a tricycle operator, dead.

Monday's shooting happened in diverse places within Awka, and according to sources, about three persons lost their lives in the incidents.

A source said one of the incidents around her area in Ukwuorji happened about 5 p.m.

The victim is said to be a private security operative living in our area. He hailed from Abagana and was

●Police raid ESN, IPOB camps in Anambra ●Those killing innocent Biafrans can't be addressed as police, Army officers— Simon Ekpa ●Suspected cultists gun down 2 people in Awka

living with his elder sister until his death on Monday," she stated.

Another source said there were also shootings at St. Faith Cathedral area near the popular Eke Awka Market and Amawbia area, where one person was also killed.

The source said: "That of Amawbia saw the death of a young boy who made and sold Shawarma close to Eke Amawbia market. Eyewitnesses said four bullets were pumped into his head, while residents scamped for safety."

"The scene of the incident is a pole away from the State CID and the State Police Command Headquarters, but the gunmen leisurely drove away without any challenge."

"People are wondering what kind of policing we are receiving in Anambra State. No matter what happened, so long as it is not on their facility, they just keep quiet."

Meanwhile, the state Police Command said it is aware of the current state of killing and has been monitoring the trend.

When the state Police Command's spokesperson, SP Tochukwu Ikenga was contacted, he said: "We are aware of these developments, and we are currently working on a lead for possible arrest."

At the time of filing this report, he said no arrests had been made.

There have been various incidences of killings in Awka, which have been attributed to cultism.

Those killing innocent Biafrans cannot be addressed as police, Army officers—Simon Ekpa

However, the Simon Ekpa-led Biafra Republic Government in Exile has claimed that criminal elements are hiding under Nigerian security agencies to perpetrate evils in the South-East.

Ekpa made this known, Tuesday, in a post on his official X handle while reacting to some incidents in the region, particularly Imo State.

He was particularly reacting to a recent attack at a checkpoint near SaveMore Market Place, Iretu in Owerri West Local Government Area of Imo State where some security operatives and civilians were murdered.

According to him, "Those neutralised in Owerri were terrorists who killed innocent Biafran ladies during fierce battles with Biafrans."

"People that kill and maim innocent and unarmed civilians are not to be addressed as officers. They are none of those names, address them as terrorists they are."

Nwifuru, Umahi, Elechi, Anyim, CAN, others warn against national protest

THE clamour for a national protest in some quarters was in Ebonyi State jettisoned and relegated to the background, with the leaders pledging their support for the administration of President Bola Tinubu and Governor Francis Nwifuru of Ebonyi State.

The leaders, who spoke were of the view that protests would not only bring about retrogressive tendencies but also destabilisation of the polity.

Speaking during a one-day Ebonyi State Youths and Stakeholders interactive session at the Christian Ecumenical Centre, Abakaliki, Governor Nwifuru urged the youths of the state to refrain from participating in the planned national protest.

He said: "Today is a day set aside to provide governments and other stakeholders in youth development with the opportunity to draw attention to issues that have a direct bearing on our resolve to better the lots of our young people."

"This event today is timely and appropriate at this period when our youths are restive and confrontational in their demands for policies that would make them fulfill their life purposes."

"Today, we gather to listen, to learn and to collaborate. I want to hear your ideas, your concerns and your aspirations. We will work together to

address the challenges you face and unlock your full potential."

"I am aware of the planned protest against hunger and bad governance scheduled to take place across the country including Ebonyi State. While I understand the reasons and concerns that have led to this call to action, I strongly urge you all to refrain from participating in this protest."

"As your governor, my administration is committed to addressing the challenges we face, and we are working tirelessly to improve the lives of our citizens. However, protests can often lead to unintended consequences, including violence, destruction of property, and disruption of essential services."

"Instead, I invite you to engage with us through constructive dialogue and peaceful channels such as today's event. We have established these mechanisms for feedback and complaints, and we are always willing to listen to your concerns."

The Minister of Works, Sen. David Umahi called on the youths to shun protests as the administration of President Tinubu was already addressing the challenges facing the youths and the country at large.

Umahi, who x-rayed the danger posed by the conduct and organization of protests, assured the youths that no one would be oppressed or look for food in the country.

Former Governor Martin Elechi and former Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Sen. Anyim Pius Anyim who extolled the sterling qualities of Governor Nwifuru noted that the achievements of the governor have been impactful as youths cannot afford to join any protest, that will destabilize the progress of the state.

Other speakers included representatives of the Christian Association of Nigeria, Market Women, Youth Movements and Organisations, the National Union of Road Transport Workers, the Nigeria Labour Congress, and NLC, among others.

Imo NURTW urges members not to participate

Also yesterday, the Imo State Chairman of the National Union of Road Transport Workers, NURTW Samuel Udeh enjoined members of the union not to join the hardship protest commencing today.

He said it would cause more harm than good.

He gave the warning to fellow unionists during an emergency meeting of the State Executive Committee, SEC, of the union, held on Tuesday in Owerri.