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Four beheaded in renewed Ebonyi boundary clash



• *Killings barbaric, disregard for human life, says Governor Nwifuru*

Four persons have been killed in Okporojo-Oso Edda in Edda Local Government Area in a renewed boundary dispute between the community and neighboring Amasiri in Afikpo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

Several houses were also razed by the assailants during the attack which took place on Thursday night.

The two communities have been at war for decades over land with many lives lost and property worth billions of naira destroyed.

Efforts have been made by previous administrations in the state as well as the present government to end the war but to no avail.

Sources in the area alleged that the assailants in the latest attack came from the Amasiri axis.

A video recording of the aftermath of the attack showing the bodies of the dead victims without their heads lying in the pool of their own blood have since gone viral on social media.

In the video, many houses set ablaze by the assailants were still burning.

Sources in the community alleged that the heads of the victims were taken away while two persons remained missing.

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The incident has thrown the community into mourning and renewed concerns over the persistent failure to permanently resolve the decades-old land dispute between the two neighbouring communities.

The Ebonyi State Commissioner for Internal Security, Etta Uka Ude, confirmed the incident in an interview in Abakaliki, the state capital, yesterday.

He said he received reports of the killings by the evening of the incident, describing the act as “barbaric, unlawful and totally unacceptable.”

According to the commissioner, the location where the killings occurred is not even the exact area under dispute, making the attack more disturbing.

“By 5 pm yesterday, I was informed that some hoodlums went into one of the villages and massacred almost four persons. I was trying to understand the actual problem, because the land dispute area is far away from the town,” he said.

Mr Ude explained that upon receiving the report, the state government moved swiftly to prevent escalation.

He said he immediately contacted the chairmen of the affected local government areas, the Commissioner of Police, the Deputy Governor, and the Army, including the Women Battalion Commander, who had just resumed duty.

“Everybody was on hand to make sure the situation did not escalate further. Unfortunately, before the arrival of security agencies, the damage had already been done,” he stated.

The commissioner noted that although calm had been largely restored with the deployment of tactical police teams and military personnel, the government has ordered for investigation and possible arrest of the perpetrators for prosecution.

“Nobody is greater than the government. Those involved must be fished out and prosecuted so we can know the root cause of this problem. Whoever is involved must be brought to book. We are not encouraging violence in any form,” he stressed.

Mr Ude also condemned the beheading of victims, describing it as alien to the culture of Ebonyi people.

“To behead someone and carry the head away is barbaric. Even our customs do not agree with that. It is very bad and very unlawful,” he said.

While sympathising with the families of the victims, the commissioner urged residents of both communities to remain calm and allow security agencies to do their work, warning against blocking major roads and disrupting public movement.

Police spokesperson, Joshua Ukandu, said he was with a police team heading to the affected area.

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“I will issue a statement after we have assessed the situation”, he said.

The Chairman Edda Local Government Area, Chima Ekumankama also confirmed the incident in a telephone interview yesterday.

He described it as barbaric, act of wickedness and man inhumanity to man.

He noted that security personnel had been mobilised to the area following the quick intervention of the Governor.

“This is sad and disheartening. This is barbaric, how can human beings behave like animals? How can people invade a community, behead people and take the heads away?

“Are they using it for rituals or what? The perpetrators must be fished out and prosecuted.

“The situation is unthinkable.

“In a modern world when we are meant to live together as brothers, people would have the mind to invade and attack a community, beheading them? Again, it’s quite painful.

My prayer is for God’s quick intervention, so that this thing will stop,” Mr Ekumankama said.

Killings barbaric, disregard for human life, says Governor Nwifuru

Governor Francis Nwifuru of Ebonyi State yesterday condemned the killings, which has cast a shadow on the state government’s efforts to resolve the age-long land dispute.

In a statement signed by his Chief Press Secretary, Dr Monday Uzor, Nwifuru directed security agents to conduct thorough investigations into the circumstances that led to the attack on Oso community.

The governor described the attack as barbaric and a flagrant disregard for sanctity of human life.

He said: “I received with shock, news of the recent attack on Oso community which claimed lives and led to destruction of properties.

“This act of callousness is a direct affront on our commitment to restore peace in our communities, and we cannot tolerate it.

“The security of lives and property is of utmost importance for us as a government, and no effort will be spared in getting to the roots of this matter.”

Nwifuru disclosed that he was collaborating with law enforcement agents to arrest the perpetrators.

“I appeal to the affected community not to engage in reprisals.

“Law enforcement agents should take swift actions and mobilise fully to the area to forestall re-occurrence or reprisals.

“My prayers and thoughts are with the families, who lost their loved ones and properties in the unfortunate incident,” he said.

He assured the families that they would not be left alone and urged communities in the state to always embrace peace and mutual co-existence.

“No development will thrive in an atmosphere of violence and destruction,” he said in the statement.