

Anambra youths protest killing of 26-year-old, demand probe

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Photo of the protesters marching along the Alex Ekwueme Square towards the government house. Photo: Ikenna Obianeri

By Ikenna Obianeri

Some youths of Mgbakwu community in Awka North Local Government Area of Anambra State have protested the alleged killing of a 26-year-old man identified as Chinyeaka Ike by operatives of the state's Special Anti-Touting Squad.

The incident, which reportedly occurred around 8pm on Thursday in the area, ignited outrage among residents, particularly youths, who accused enforcement agencies of repeated harassment and extrajudicial actions.

The death generated strong emotions in the community, as he was the only son of his parents and had recently got married, with his wife expecting their first child next month.

In a show of anger, hundreds of aggrieved residents, mainly youths, marched from Mgbakwu to the Anambra State Government House in Awka on Friday, carrying the remains of the deceased alongside placards and green leaves in protest against the killing.

Their placards largely read, "End persistent intimidation and violence by state task forces."

Speaking to journalists, the youths' spokesperson, Arinze Nwoye, said operatives of SASA stormed the area and began apprehending young people indiscriminately.

Nwoye alleged that Ike and another youth attempted to flee but were pursued, with the deceased reportedly shot and later killed under brutal circumstances.

He said, “We want the state governor, Prof. Chukwuma Soludo, to be aware of this development and tell us what to do because this is too much.

“This innocent soul that just died is a promising youth who was hardworking. What have we done to SASA and other agencies?

“We don’t want to take the law into our hands; that is why we are here to complain to the governor.

“We voted for him in both the first and second tenure; we don’t want SASA again in Mgbakwu community.”

A community leader, Chimaobi Egwu, shared footage of the deceased on social media, accusing the security groups of exceeding their mandate.

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In a letter addressed to the governor and security agencies, Egwu described the agencies as a source of fear for residents.

He also referenced a similar incident in Mgbakwu less than a year ago involving the Udogachi group, suggesting a pattern of alleged abuse.

Other community members also echoed similar concerns, alleging that multiple security outfits, including SASA, frequently conduct raids that disrupt daily life and create an atmosphere of tension in the community.

The protesters called on Soludo to urgently review the activities of enforcement agencies in the state to prevent extrajudicial killings.

They stressed that law enforcement must operate within the ambit of the law, with respect for justice and human rights.

While addressing the protesters, the Chief of Staff to the Governor, Ben Nwankwo, described the situation as deeply troubling and extended the state government’s condolences to the bereaved family.

Nwankwo said, “This is a sad incident. The governor is not happy with this development. He is a peaceful leader who does not support or wish his citizens anything like this.

“He has directed that the police and DSS commence immediate investigation to unravel what transpired.

“We urge you to remain calm and refrain from taking the law into your own hands, assuring you that the government is committed to addressing the allegations.”

Similarly, the Special Adviser to the governor on Community Security, Ken Emeakayi, acknowledged the gravity of the situation.

Emeakayi disclosed that representatives of the protesting youths would engage with government officials in a bid to resolve the matter.