

Kidnappers kill victim after ransom in Delta

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The once peaceful Oghara Kingdom in Ethiope West Local Government Area of Delta State has allegedly become a hotspot for organised criminal violence, particularly kidnapping, following the killing of a man after the payment of ransom.

PUNCH Metro learnt that the deceased was abducted alongside his wife, who later escaped captivity, before he was killed despite the payment of ransom.

A civil advocacy group in the community, the Oghara Study Group, disclosed this at a press conference held in Warri on Thursday.

Addressing journalists on behalf of OSG, the co-conveners of the group, Rev. David Ugolor and Prof. Ogheneruonah Eghweree, lamented that “the security situation in Oghara and the environment has worsened in recent times, with the increasing wave of banditry, kidnappings and killings in the locality.

“Victims are increasingly being murdered even after ransom payments while poor families are left helpless and devastated,” the OSG added.

According to the group, residents live in fear as kidnappers, armed gangs and cult groups continue to attack communities, farms and major roads without adequate intervention.

The group continued, “The latest abduction of a husband and wife has heightened fear among residents and strengthened calls for urgent intervention by the Federal Government, Delta State Government and Ethiope West Local Government Council.

“The increasing insecurity has turned life into a nightmare for many families, particularly the poor and less privileged who are unable to raise the huge ransom payments demanded by kidnappers.

“In several cases, victims were killed before any rescue could be carried out, while others were murdered even after ransom had been paid, leaving families to mourn their loved ones and suffer severe financial hardship.”

Presenting an executive summary of its findings, the OSG described Oghara Kingdom as the historic “Gateway to Urhoboland” and home to major institutions, including the Delta State University Teaching Hospital, Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe-Oghara, Western Delta University and several oil and gas companies.

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It warned that persistent insecurity now threatens education, healthcare, agriculture, investment and economic activities across the kingdom.

According to the OSG, documented incidents reveal a disturbing pattern of armed banditry, kidnapping for ransom, cult-related violence and ritual killings stretching across Oghara and surrounding communities, including the Oghara-Sapele and Warri-Sapele corridors.

The group listed several verified incidents, including the June 25, 2026, kidnapping and killing along the Otefe-Ovade Link Road, in which one victim was killed while ransom was paid for another. It also cited the June 23 kidnapping on the Ologbo-Benin Road, where the victim remained in captivity as negotiations continued.

Other incidents highlighted included the killing of a farmer during a kidnapping in Ogharefe in May 2026, despite a ransom payment, while his body was yet to be recovered. In April 2026, another farmer was reportedly abducted, raped and killed in Otefe Village before any rescue could be effected.

The OSG further recalled kidnappings in Ogharefe in March 2026, Ijomi Village in February 2026 and Ovade Junction in January 2026, noting that while some victims regained freedom after ransom

payments, others died before rescue efforts could succeed. Similar cases were also recorded between July and December 2025 across Oghareki, Ogharefe, Ovade Village and the Otefe-Ovade Link Road.

The group said the recurring attacks have left many families traumatised, with survivors receiving little or no psychosocial support. It added that fear of attacks has restricted movement and disrupted farming, business activities, education and worship, while undermining confidence in the existing security architecture.

“The persistence of banditry-induced violence in Oghara Kingdom reflects a wider failure of coordinated security governance rather than the failure of any single agency,” the group stated, stressing that traditional institutions and community structures should be recognised as active partners in addressing insecurity.

The OSG called on the Federal Government to deploy additional police personnel and, where necessary, joint military and police task force operatives to secure the Warri-Sapele corridor and institutional areas within Oghara. It also demanded a transparent investigation into recent killings and kidnappings and the extension of the Federal Government’s Safe Schools and Safe Campus initiatives to educational institutions in the kingdom.

The group also urged the Delta State Government to strengthen police operational capacity in Oghara and Sapele through additional personnel, patrol vehicles and rapid-response equipment, while also integrating community vigilante groups into the state’s security framework with proper support and clear rules of engagement.

It further appealed to the Ethiope West Local Government Council to convene an emergency security summit involving the traditional institution, security agencies, vigilante groups and religious organisations; improve street lighting and communication infrastructure in vulnerable communities; and establish a functional security liaison desk for prompt reporting and follow-up of incidents.