

# For alleged witchcraft, 8 killed in Ebonyi

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**T**HE spiraling violence that engulfed Onicha Igboeze communities in Onicha local government area of Ebonyi state since February took another dimension last week as members of the community killed eight others for allegedly witchcraft.

Assistant Inspector General (AIG) of Police in charge of zone nine Calabar, Mr. Ade A. Ajakaiye who disclosed this in Abakaliki while fielding questions from newsmen weekend, noted that the incident was not officially reported to the police by the relations of the deceased for fear of being attacked by the youths except one man who was taken to a shrine in Delta state to confirm whether he was wizard or not. He added that the man is a father of a lawyer.

"We got the information through intelligence reports. We are not investigating that for now, we are only interested in the whereabouts of our missing officers," the AIG noted.

He stated that the youths recently went on what they called sanitization of the community, killing those suspected to be witches or wizards in the area, noting that they always carry guns fomenting trouble and violence taking law into their hands, 'we all condemn this type of behaviour particularly from the area'.

On the arrest of some youths who came to testify before a panel of inquiry set up by the state government on the crisis, AIG said there was nothing like immunity to anybody, saying that police arrested the suspects after the panel's sitting and there was even a warrant of

arrest earlier before the time of the arrest, "so it is a legal thing".

He however stated that it wasn't the arrest of the suspects that led to the stoppage of the sitting of the panel, saying that they stopped sitting because the chairman of the panel was given a higher appointment in the state which made the panel to go on break.

On the security situation in the area at present, the AIG states; "presently we have full units of mobile police men there that is 23 men and conventional police men already there, I think we have covered ground in the area".

He stated that 22 suspects have been arrested in Onicha Igboeze, following the persistent disturbances in the area which led to the disappearance of two police officers, burning and destruction of houses including the state Deputy Governor's house Dr. Chigozie Ogbu.

The police boss condemned the attitude of the youths in the area, saying that Onicha problem has gone beyond an ordinary thing. "Imagine a small village like this that have inflicted so much violence on their own within a period of four months; the first in February and second in this June. It is very unfortunate. Is that the kind of life we want in Nigeria? When we thinking of development and progress, and some people are bent on making sure that those who are progressing is being drawn back. I don't think anybody will support that idea," he stressed.

Mr Ajakaiye said that those arrested in connection with the crisis will face the wrath of the law, saying that the case was already in court. "If you allow criminals to go free then you are encouraging others to become criminals. We are going to pursue this case to a logical conclusion".

On whether those officers missing in Onicha are still alive or dead, the police boss said: "Following the law we cannot say that they are dead, because the law says, if someone is missing we cannot declare him dead until after seven years, then our investigations and inquiries may lead us to say we have evidence that they are dead".

## intments

Meanwhile, the governor is said to be in dilemma on whom to appoint or reject in his cabinet list from many candidates submitted by several godfathers.

But he has reportedly exercised caution in his choice of commissioners and special advisers in order not to offend any godfather especially now that there are lingering threats to his position.

## itor's mum Mrs Ebiri buried