

# Ebonyi communal crisis: President's aide, others killed

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Far from being over, the communal war between Ezillo and Ezza-Ezillo communities in Ishielu local government area of Ebonyi state has claimed more innocent souls, this time including a presidential aide. His police orderly, driver and another passenger whose identities are still unknown, have also been reportedly killed at Ezillo and Ezza Ezillo axis of the Enugu-Abakaliki Expressway by war mongers.

Unconfirmed report also has it that a military man and a mobile police officer were reportedly killed last week and their bodies burnt.

In a related development, two persons Tayo Oyewusi from Osun and Murtala Adisa from Ogun states, who were said to be traveling from Lagos to Abkaliki, were reported either missing or killed on their getting to the troubled spot over a month ago.

A red-coloured Passat car which the victims were said to be traveling with and was bought four days earlier, was also missing alongside the victims.

A relation of the victims, one Mr. Babatunde Williams, who has been frequenting Ebonyi state from Lagos to inquire from the police the whereabouts of the victims, relayed the incident to our reporter.

But the Ebonyi state police command, yesterday, confirmed the suspected killing of the presidential aide and others believed to be traveling to Cross River State when they were ambushed and gruesomely murdered.

The state police public relations officer (PPRO), Mr. Chris Anyanwu, an assistant superintendent of police (ASP), who confirmed the killing, said that the latest victims met their untimely death on the 14th day of March 2010 at the exact spot where the hoodlums had been killing innocent motorists at Ezillo.

"We woke up that faithful day and discovered that some persons were either attacked or were met with an accident along Abakaliki- Enugu Express road, exactly at the area where there is crisis between the Ezza-Ezillo people and the Ezillo people," the PPRO said.

He confirmed that a vehicle was burnt and that the command is currently investigating the matter, adding that the state Criminal Investigation Department (CID) would soon come up with the true identity of individuals killed in the incident.

A sports utility vehicle, Seine Jeep, was burnt with four passengers on board.

The PPRO said the command has taken cognizance of the fact that the area is volatile and advised motorists not to ply the route at night hours, adding that the miscreants have since adopted a guerrilla type of attack on innocent motorists.

"That area is troublesome and we are advising people not to travel or pass through that area, especially at night hours. I have said it before and I'm repeating it, if you are coming from Enugu and it gets dark, you better sleep at Enugu and continue your journey the next morning, and if you are coming from Abakaliki and it gets

dark please sleep in Abakaliki and continue the next morning."

He said the command has beefed up security in the area to ensure the safety of life and properties of citizens plying the road, adding that at every ward they are, there is presence of heavily armed mobile policemen in the area. "The Commissioner of Police Dipo Ayeni, in his wisdom, has deployed mobile policemen to the area with Armored Personnel Carriers (APC) that prowl the area at night time but we still advise that people should not pass that area once it is late."

In recent time, we have observed that the kind of attack this miscreants use is the one you can describe as guerrilla attack, they can just take anybody unawares, they can spring surprises. Atimes, we view it risky, stationing our policemen there in the night because this people can just creep there and before you know it, they would shoot people and run away.

ASP Chris Anyanwu said that most of the mobile policemen mounted in the area do not know the terrain very well as most of them are from other commands of the police force, stressing that they cannot pursue the criminals into the bushes that they do not know the terrain.

It would be recalled that the people of Ezillo and their Ezza aborigines have been at war since May 10, 2007 over alleged piece of land with over 300 lives lost and property worth millions of Naira destroyed.

The alleged mayhem, importation of arms and ammunition is coming on the heels of the state local government election scheduled for July 10, 2010.