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10 feared killed in Imo oil spillage

From Charles Ogugbuaja, Owerri

NO fewer than 10 persons from Awara, Umuapu and Obiti in Ohaji Egbema Local Council of Imo State were yesterday feared dead following an oil spillage from alleged pipeline vandalism in the area.

The bodies of the affected persons were burnt beyond recognition, The Guardian gathered.

Meanwhile, the Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Dr. Amanze Obi, who confirmed the incident to The Guardian, also warned that people should desist from unwholesome activities in the state.

He said the Commissioner for Environment, Dr Aloysius Aguwa, would soon make statements on the matter, adding that he was gathering information on the actual incident that led to the spillage and subsequent killing of the affected persons.

According to a witness who identified himself as Ugochukwu, the fire began when the victims, after allegedly vandalising oil pipeline at Egbema-Awara-Obiti in Ohaji/Egbema I Council, started scooping from the spill into tankers.

The witness said the victims, after filling the first tanker, began to fill the second one when it caught fire and set the entire area ablaze.

Some personal effects of people from the area, including their farmlands were affected.

A community leader from the area, who pleaded anonymity, accused youths from the neighbouring village of the alleged "vandalism and cultism."

He appealed to Governor Ikedi Ohakim to beef up security in the area, adding: "We want well co-ordinated security action plan in this area. Youths from the neighbouring villages are responsible for alleged acts of vandalism and cultism."

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