

NEWS.

Community petitions IG over killing of indigene

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TWO communities in Enugu State that have been embroiled in a dispute over land ownership, are accusing the State Commissioner of Police (CP) of taking sides and have petitioned the Inspector General of Police over the killing of one of their brethrens, even as they alleged Police complicity in the murder.

The petition sent to the IGP Suleiman Abba on Monday in Abuja indicated that some elders from Umunenshi Umunnajingene kindred of Amechi-Uwani in Enugu South Local Council, led by Uwaezuoke Agbo, alleged that one Afamefuna Ugwu and three others killed their relation, Chinedu Nnaji, in cold blood.

Afamefuna was arrested and charged to court for murder, but was later released at the instance of the Enugu State Commissioner of Police (CP) Adamu Abubakar Mohammed.

The petition entitled: "An appeal for Justice," signed by Sunny Anyanwu, stated that the CP facilitated the release of the suspect when he "ordered the Police prosecutor to amend the charges from armed robbery, the original charges, to read assault causing harm."

Agbo, in the company of the community's legal adviser, Sunny Anyanwu said, "the dispute was resolved in court but the other communities refused the court ruling. They still came back, gave three plots of the land to CP Abubakar, who in turn sold it at the rate of N3 million."

"We have faced serious threat from the Umuewo-Ukwu family over this land. When we discovered the land was sold, we challenged it in court, the case is still in court. But when we got information that they were working on our land, we tried to prevent anyone from working there. It was on one of such intervention that the other family, led by Afamefuna, ambushed the people from our family and killed our brother Chinedu Nnaji, whose body is still at the Eastern Nigeria Medical Centre in Enugu."

Among the prayers of the petition is that the IG "should act immediately to forestall communal clashes between the two communities", the arrest and prosecution of those involved in the killing of their kinsman and the CP among others.

The Umunenshi and Umuewo-Ukwu families of Umunnajingene, kindred of Amechi-Uwani, in Enugu South Local Council of Enugu State have been enmeshed in the disputed land for more than two decades,



according to court documents made available to The Guardian. The case was won in court and the other community, said to be a lineage of visitors, lost the case.

They filed an appeal at the Enugu State Court of Appeal, but the presiding judge of the Court of Appeal seating in Enugu, Justice Francis Nwoye in April 1993 ruled that issues laid down by the applicant Gabriel Nnaji and three others on behalf of Umuunnenshi kindred, against the background that the Umuewo-Ukwu families are visitors, justifies that they are owners of the land as "the position of the law is that if a plaintiff leads evidence of traditional history which the court accepts, a defendant who fails to do so cannot rely on acts of possession as proof of title to the land in dispute."

They proceeded to the Supreme Court but failure of the Appellant Egbo Nwugwu and nine others to file their brief on the due date, made Justice Legbo Kutigi, the then Chief Justice of Nigeria, to dismiss the case under order 6 rule 3(2) Rules of the Supreme Court.

According to Agbo, who was flanked by Friday Nnanji and Uchenna Okoh, a petition will be submitted to the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Suleiman Abba on December 22, 2014 requesting for the withdrawal of the CP from the state as "our homes are not safe anymore, men of the State Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) have being instructed to get us by all means."

"We have fled our homes, the entire community is living in fear as the conspiracy is becoming more obvious," the petition read.

Although the CP did not respond to calls from The Guardian, even after a text message was sent, he had earlier told some journalists who called him that he (CP) did not collect any land from anyone, that the other community tried in vain to give him a piece of land but he rejected it.

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