

Gruesome murder of family members

Three kinsmen killed over land dispute in Enugu



The late Sunday Nnamani



The late Nnamani Ikpa



The late Nnaemeka Agbo

From **Lawrence Njoku Enugu**

SINCE their gruesome murder a few weeks ago, tension has continued to mount in Amechi-Awkunanaw, a bustling suburban town in Enugu South Local Council of Enugu State.

May 1 has always been used to celebrate workers all over the country. And it was on the occasion of this year's Workers' Day that tragedy befell three families of Umuaniebo kindred namely Umunwakum, Umunogo and Umunengene, as three of their sons were killed in broad daylight over a disputed land.

The victims were identified as Nnaemeka Agbo (aka Echidime), Sunday Nnamani and Nnamani Ikpa.

Curiously, the two factions locked in the bloody dispute are from the same kindred and have lived together in the same Isiagu, Amechi Uwani community.

The tragic day had begun like any other day for the community and since it was a work-free day, especially for the civil servants among them, they felt it was necessary to summon residents to a meeting over the disputed land. *The Guardian* gathered

that the vast disputed land, which lies directly opposite government-owned Millennium Estate under construction, along the Enugu-Port Harcourt Expressway, and about five minutes drive away from the state capital, was originally jointly-owned by the three families.

It was alleged that the Umunengene had turned around to lay claims of exclusive ownership of the piece of land. Portions of the land were said to have been sold, while those who bought the land had started construction on it leading to protests by the two other members of the family (Umunwakum and Umunogo).

The matter was said to have been reported to the Council Chairman of Enugu South, Victor Agbo, who promptly alerted the police, whereby a "steer clear order" was allegedly issued to all parties.

On May 1, however, after their meeting, the Umunwakum and Umunogo families had raised a 15-man delegation to undertake an on-the-spot inspection of the hilly land and report back to the larger family.

Oblivious of what awaited them, the delegation was said to have em-

barked on the journey. It, however, turned out to be fatal as three of them were killed by gunshots fired at them by unknown attackers on the piece of land while many others sustained injuries.

A community leader, Chief Oliver Okonkwo Agbo, said events leading to the killing of the young men, who were his first cousins, was triggered off when "certain elements on the other side began to clear the vast land in dispute, using caterpillars and bulldozers. They claimed they wanted to build an exclusive estate and may have even collected money from people as we learnt."

He continued: "We reported the development to our son and Mayor of Enugu South Council, Victor Agbo, whom we gathered promptly briefed the police authorities, upon which a steer clear order was issued to all parties."

He added that, on the day, the three people were shot and killed, the deceased were part of a larger team mandated by his people to visit the site and report back on compliance or otherwise, with the police directive.

"However, the three healthy young men were killed instantly as gun-

shots rang from all directions; so many escaped with varying degrees of bullet wounds, while others were butchered with machetes and axes," he recounted.

Chief Agbo urged the police to do the "needful, identify and arrest those who engaged in the genocide."

He added: "It is insensitive, the height of recklessness and impunity for people to pick up arms against unarmed opponents in a civil contest."

"We do not want to take the law into our own hands and then begin to decimate ourselves further; let the police help us by identifying and arresting specific culprits involved and then holding them to account."

Meanwhile, the Police in Enugu said on Tuesday that about seven persons had been arrested over the incident. Police Public Relations Officer in the state, Ebere Amaraizu, who confirmed this to *The Guardian*, said that the suspects "have made useful statements that have assisted investigations."

He called on the affected communities to remain law-abiding, assuring that all would be done to ensure justice at the end of the day.