

News

# Tension in Delta communities over vigilante killings of youths

By **Chido Okafor, Warri**

20 February 2025 | 3:24 am



*One of the victims*



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The Guardian learnt that the crisis began last Thursday when 10 members of the Mosogar vigilante group allegedly invaded Ijomi, claiming they were pursuing a suspect linked to frequent kidnappings in Mosogar.

Eyewitness accounts revealed that the suspect, upon sighting the vigilante group, fled into the bush, leaving three other men behind. Instead of chasing the fleeing suspect, the vigilante group reportedly apprehended the three men, forced them into their vehicle, and transported them to Mosogar without notifying the Oghara Police Station.

During the journey, the vigilante group contacted the Local Council Chairman, Chris Onogba, who instructed them to bring the three men to his residence.

Onogba narrated: “News of the arrest spread quickly, and soon, a large crowd armed with weapons and kegs of petrol surrounded my house, threatening to burn it down.”

To diffuse the situation, Onogba called the Divisional Police Officer in Mosogar, who moved the men to the police station. While efforts were being made to secure their safety, a video surfaced showing two of the men being burned.

Reacting to the incident, Onogba said: “I felt terrible watching the video. Although Mosogar has experienced kidnappings recently, investigations by the Department of State Services (DSS) did not indicate that the kidnappers were in Oghara. How the vigilante group traced them there is baffling.”

The families of the victims, however, have accused the council chairman of complicity. Mr Igho Onigba, elder brother to one of the deceased, Bigman Onigba, alleged that the vigilante acted on instructions from Onogba.

He stated: “Shortly after they took my brother and the others, youths in Ijomi



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Community leaders in Oghara have condemned the actions of the vigilante group. A resident, Okiemute, said: “The video of the gruesome killing was heartbreaking. When did a vigilante group assume the role of law enforcement? The barbarism displayed is alarming and reflects the growing wickedness in our society.”

Another resident, Charles, added: “Even if the victims were kidnappers, they deserved a fair trial. Vigilante groups have no right to take lives arbitrarily. Life is sacred and must be treated as such.”

Criticism was also directed at the council chairman, with residents accusing him of failing to protect lives. A community elder stated: “The chairman’s lacklustre response to this crisis has fuelled tensions in Ijomi and Oghara. His actions suggest partiality in a sensitive matter like this.”

He urged the people of Oghara to remain calm and allow the legal system to address the issue. “While our anger is justified, we must exercise caution and maintain peace. Justice will prevail if we trust the system,” he said.

Meanwhile, Delta State Police spokesperson, Bright Edade, confirmed the incident but stated that only two people were killed in Mosogar, contrary to reports of four deaths. He added that while others were shot in Oghara, none died.

Edafe disclosed that the police have launched a manhunt for the perpetrators, who are currently at large.

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