

Tension in Ebonyi community as couple killed, mutilated in farmland dispute

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Ebonyi State Commissioner for Police, CP Adaku Uche-Anya

Tension has gripped Ihie Autonomous Community in Ishiagu, Ivo Local Council of Ebonyi State, following the brutal killing of a husband and wife whose bodies were discovered with vital organs missing after they went to their farm.

The Guardian had earlier reported the abduction of the couple by unidentified persons from the Ihie community. Witnesses alleged that their attackers mutilated the corpses, cutting off the victims' limbs before fleeing. Their names have yet to be officially released.

Sources said the victims were killed on their farmland after repeated warnings from suspected assailants not to return to the disputed area. The incident is the latest flashpoint in a decades-long dispute over farmland ownership between Ihie residents and Ezza settlers, who were originally granted land for farming in the community.

Speaking during an emergency peace meeting at the palace of the traditional ruler of Ihie, Gabriel Okoro, the Commissioner for Water Resources, Magnus Chinedu Nkahi, condemned the killings and urged both sides to embrace dialogue.

“There is nothing like peace, and our people must do anything to uphold it. We will not tolerate any act of killing because it is a sacrilege in this community,” he said, pledging to support peace initiatives while delivering on water projects across the state.

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High Chief Ekenenneobodo Cletus traced the history of cordial coexistence between Ihie and Ezza settlers until recent years, when disputes over land sales, rent, and boundaries intensified. He alleged that some Ezza elements had, in recent months, blocked farm roads, assaulted locals, and destroyed property.

Among the most serious incidents, he said, was the burning of the home of a resident, Mr. Ekwueme, with losses estimated at over N20 million, including cement, rice, gari, generators, and electronics.

“We have been known for our accommodating spirit. But killing in Ishiagu and Ihie is a taboo. If you commit such an act, you must be banished for life. Our people will never take the law into their own hands, but we call on the government to bring the perpetrators to justice and recover the corpses of our slain kinsfolk for proper burial,” he said.

Security agencies, including the police and military, have been deployed to the area, but community leaders alleged that some suspects remain at large and have been evading invitations for questioning.

The Chairman of Ivo Local Council, Ajah Emmanuel, has set up a peace committee to address the crisis. However, reports indicate that Ezza representatives have attended only once, insisting that their grievances stem from halted land sales and increased rent demands.