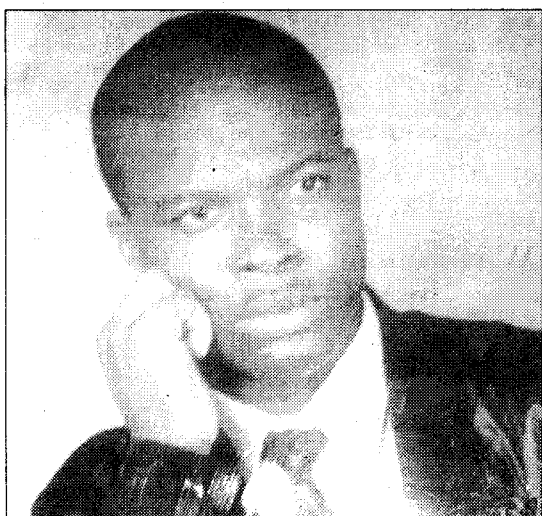




THE METROSECTION

Cry for justice over a murdered son

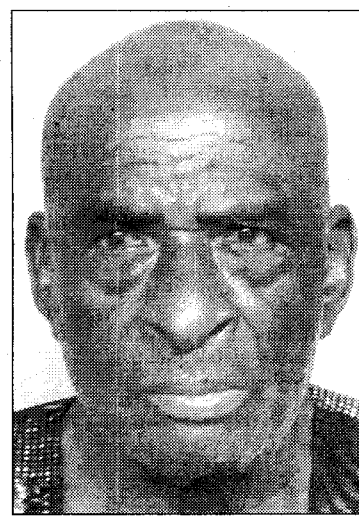
• Enugu community allege Police complicity in persecution over land



• The late Onumgbo



• His wife, Ukama and kids



• His aged father: Cyril Onumgbo

By Joseph Onyekwere

UNTIL a few weeks ago, Mrs. Ukama Vincent Onumgbo, a housewife and mother of three from Amokwu Affa in Udi Local Council of Enugu State, was happily married.

Things were moving on fine as her husband, Vincent Onumgbo, an Onitsha-based businessman, ensured they lacked nothing.

Then, on the very last day of 2009, her husband was murdered as he was returning from Enugu with his brother.

She is now a widow crying for justice for the brutal murder of her husband.

The immediate elder brother of the deceased, Emmanuel Onumgbo, told *The Guardian* what happened: "We were coming back from Enugu that fateful day. When we got to Affa junction and alighted, we noticed that there were no commercial motorcyclists at the junction anymore. So, without suspicion of any crisis, we decided to walk home since the distance was not that far.

"A few minutes later, some armed youths from Umuoka suddenly emerged, pointed at us and said we should be killed. We fled in different directions but unfortunately, they caught Vincent and killed him."

His assailants were said to have attached a note to his clothes and dumped his body in a bush. The note read: "Warning: This is just the beginning. If Affa try Umuoka Community again, Affa in general will witness worse than this."

The widow, still in tears over her loss, said: "Life has not been easy for us since my husband was killed. My children have not been able to return to school. I am appealing to the government to help me return my children to school as well as quick settlement of the matter so we can bury the dead."

According to her, the eldest child is still traumatised as a result of the incident while the younger one is asking when daddy would come back.

When the youths of Affa discovered the corpse of their kinsman, they invaded Umuoka Village and burnt some houses.

That was their undoing as Mobile policemen allegedly, at the behest of an influential man in Umuoka, invaded Affa and began indiscriminate arrest, intimidation, harassment and detention of both indigenes and visitors alike. As it is, the death of Vincent has been covered up and nobody seems to be talking about it anymore.

Both the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) of Udi, then, Mr. Samuel Bassey and the mobile police commander who assisted in the recovery of the dead, were transferred to Nsukka and Awka respectively.

But Ebere Amaraizu, the Police Public Relations Officer for Enugu Command would not agree there was anything peculiar or untoward with the transfers.

He told *The Guardian* the transfer of the former DPO was an administrative issue.

According to him, the police authorities are fully aware of the incident and are open to any information that would help their investigations over the murder and arson.

Curiously however, some Affa indigenes have been charged to an Enugu Magistrate's Court for the murder of their own kinsman in suit no: ME/11C/2010 while the Umuoka businessman has been boasting that he was going to deal with Affa, that he is well-connected in Enugu State government

circles.

A brother to the deceased, Oliver, said the murder case file, which was in D4 State Criminal Investigation Department in Enugu has surprisingly been transferred to D9 where the Umuoka businessman's allegation of arson is being investigated.

"They are playing games with the whole matter," he said, which the father of the deceased, 82-year-old Cyril Onumgbo, agreed with.

"I am appealing that the government should allow us to bury the boy. We cannot get justice in this matter unless there is intervention from the Inspector General of Police. In all they are saying, they are not even talking of the death of my son."

Similarly, Joseph Amuka, 68, a village trader believes the Enugu State government is already biased over the matter.

According to him, there is nothing that Enugu State government is doing to resolve the issue amicably. "While we are complaining of the death of our son, they are busy talking of a burnt factory," he said and appealed to the Federal Government to intervene and stop the harassment and intimidation from the businessman and the police.

The *Guardian* gathered that the unlucky victim ran into armed Umuoka youths who went to stop Affa people from installing a signpost with the inscription *Welcome to Amokwu Affa* at a disputed junction.

By the time the deceased and his brother got to the scene, Affa people had already retreated. In fact, the signpost was the second attempt by Affa people to show direction to their community.

The erection of the first one, which was a giant post sparked off the current crisis and resurrected insidious communal animosity between the two communities.

According to sources, Makurdi Branch of Affa Association had built and mounted the gigantic signpost with the same inscription at the junction. A few days after the signpost was installed, the influential businessman instructed that the signpost be removed.

It was in the process of doing so that the steel structure fell and killed one of the youths named Uchenna Nwaezeogbolo of Umualiba village, Umuoka.

In anger, other youths sympathetic to their dead colleague allegedly went wild and burnt an asphalt plant belonging to the controversial businessman and politician, which was also built on the disputed land.

But the man instead vents his spleen on Affa community.

Chief Livinus Aneke, a retired civil servant told *The Guardian* that sometime between March and April 2009, the businessman went to a boundary land between Affa and Umulumgbe, another neighbouring community and cleared a portion of land on the side of Umulumgbe.

"Then one Chief Ozo Okum who hailed from Umulumgbe reported the matter to Walter Oji, the then Local Council Chairman of Udi, who consequently set up a committee to look into the matter.

Before the committee could sit, the businessman left that of Umulumgbe and began to clear that of Affa.

"We protested but Oji intervened and pleaded that we allow him to continue and that he would set up a committee to look into the matter. After the completion of the factory in November 2009, Affa indigenes mounted a signpost on the disputed boundary. On December 5, 2009, the businessman, removed the signpost and on December 14, came with a team of policemen and arrested 14 people from Affa, claiming that we burnt his factory."

Aneke stated further that on December 31, the community built another sign-post smaller in size than the first one, took it to the junction and was mounting it when armed youths from Umuoka invaded them and forced them to retreat deep into the village.

He said the late Vincent, who did not know what was happening and was on his way back to the village, was killed by Umuoka youths who had arrived the junction to attack them.

Reacting to the incident, the traditional Prime Minister of Amokwu Affa, Pa Reuben Amadike, who said his mother hails from Umuoka, challenged any elder in Umuoka to come out and point to the boundary.

According to him, the state government does not want to be fair on the matter. His words: "We are in land dispute but Umuoka people are building on the disputed land, yet the government did not stop them. Now they are talking about burnt factory without saying anything about the one that was killed in cold blood."

"When two people are fighting and the government, instead of mediating, decides to support one party, it is indirectly saying one should kill the other."

Chief F.M.O Aniekwe, a prominent son of Affa, shares the same view with the old man. He believes that his community is being oppressed by the government because of the influence and wealth of the businessman and politician as a result of which they have written petitions to the President and Commander-in-chief, Inspector General of Police, and the Enugu State Government.

But Amaraizu denied that the police are biased over the matter.

"The police in Enugu are not biased. We are aware that the matter has gone to court. Any information that emerges, we will work on it. The State CID is on the matter now. Two things are involved: the murder of Vincent Onumgbo and the arson matter. So, there has to be balance," he said.

On account of incessant harassment and persecution of the people of Affa, counsel to the community, M.O Udeh wrote a petition dated January 25, 2010 and forwarded same to the Commissioner for Justice, Enugu State titled: "Miscarriage of Justice: Indiscriminate arrest and remand in prison of innocent persons."

In it, he complained about the arrest, detention and arraignment of eight persons from the community for purported murder of their kinsman.

Mr. Udeh, the same date, forwarded another set of petition to the State Governor, Sullivan Chime and the Speaker of the State House of Assembly, entitled: "Acts of Terrorism and Incessant Harassment and Indiscriminate Arrest of Members of Amokwu Affa community by Umuoka Gangs."

Meanwhile, the people of Affa are awaiting their state government's reaction to their cry for justice.

Photonews



• Rivers State Governor, Rotimi Amaechi, his wife, Judith, the Amanyanabo of Kalabari Kingdom, Prof. T. J. T. Princewill and Ghana High Commissioner to Nigeria, George Kumi, at the King's 80th birthday celebration in Buguma, Rivers State...recently



• Akwa Ibom State Governor, Obong Godswill Akpabio (middle), President, University of Lagos, Faculty of Law (1980/83 Set), Mr. Mike Igbokwe (SAN) (left) and Senator Effiong Bob during a courtesy visit by the 'Class 83' to Akwa Ibom State House, Uyo...recently