

Soldiers Kill Village Head Over Beer

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Nto Unang Community in Etim Ekpo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State have been thrown into mourning following the murder of the Village Head, Chief Ephraim Jumbo allegedly shot death by armed soldiers allegedly from neighbouring Ika Local Government Area. The situation has generated tension in the community, a situation that demands urgent steps from relevant authorities to nip it in the bud.

What ordinarily, was a minor disagreement between a beer parlour owner and his patron, which was not properly managed by those present is threatening the security of the town just as has have claimed the life of the community's leader.

Eye witness account maintains that the deceased's life was terminated alongside one Akwaowo Ben Akpan eve of Christmas while attempting to intervene in a quarrel over the price of a bottle of beer at a shop belonging to Uwem Jumbo.

Eyewitnesses present at the scene of the incidence told *Daily Independent* that a man had at about 5.00pm that fateful day walked into the shop to request for a bottle of beer. After exhausting the drink, he paid N150 as against the N180, which the shop attendant said was the cost of the drink.

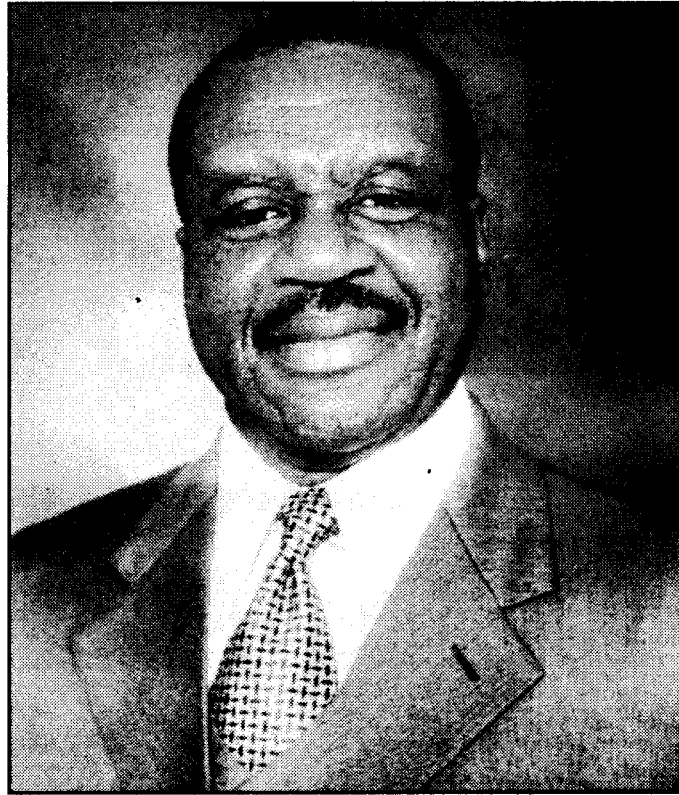
Series of appeal made to the patron yielded no fruits as the man remained adamant by refusing to pay the additional sum of money on grounds that he was not informed of the price increase which the source said led to an exchange of words.

"I do not know what happened thereafter because I left for the market, but when I came back I saw a crowd gathered in front of the shop. I was later told that the village head and someone else had been shot death by soldiers invited by the young man who had bought the beer.

Further account of the incident claimed the young man left after much persuasion to the thinking of everybody that the matter had been put to rest amicably, but to the amazement of the community people, he came back with armed soldiers who started shooting sporadically without first of all finding out what was the cause of the misunderstanding.

The matter has already pending before the police through a petition filed by one Uwem Jumbo to the Commissioner of Police. In the petition dated December 26, 2006, he linked the murder to the management of the Obo Market which the deceased was in charge saying some people around the neighbourhood were not comfortable with his strict disposition to issues.

Giving his account of the incident in the petition titled: *Murder of Chief Ephraim Jumbo and Akwaowo Ben Akpan. A Call for Immediate and Detailed Investigation*, Jumbo stated thus: "My son, Akwaowo Uwem Jumbo told me that one of the boys after drinking a bottle of Star Beer which is now sold at N180 gave N150 which he refused to collect, hence the dragging. I ordered my son to allow the boy to go in the spirit of Christmas and when the boy left, not up to 10 minutes, three soldiers fully armed and in combat ready uniform entered my store. "Because of the violent mood, I came out from the inner room of the store to the veranda to



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meet with the soldiers. I asked to know why they came to my store because soldiers hardly come there. Instead of them paying attention to me, they were asking in unison; where is the boy, probably referring to my son. After some time, I pleaded with them to leave my store and they did but stood some distance from my store and started shooting into the air and from there they left my compound and also out of sight. Continuing, "When the soldiers left, I went and reported the incidence to the Village Head, Chief Ephraim Jumbo of Nto Unang who advised me to report the matter to the police at Utu Etim Ekpo, which I did.

"After the incidence, two policemen were detailed to follow me to the scene of the incidence. On my way back to my village with the two policemen, a cyclist on the way advised me not to go to my village or compound because of the presence of so many armed soldiers which came in a Hilux Van," he said.

In the petition, Jumbo pleaded with the police authority and other security operatives whom he had copied to carry out a thorough investigation of the matter so as to get to the root cause.

When contacted, the Head of Council of Etim Ekpo, Mr. Mfon Idung said the council had been briefed and was waiting for the outcome of the police investigation. He described the murder as most unfortunate coming at a time when the whole Christendom was celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. He promised that no stone would be left unturned to bring culprits to book.