

Anambra Communities Disagree Over Death On Disputed Land

By **Eche Nwaobasi** - April 24, 2018

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Mr Chukwuemeka Nwobu when he was alive.

Nnewi

The people of Akamanator village in Nando, Anambra East Local Government Area of Anambra State have petitioned the Inspector General of Police, asking him to ensure that those involved in the killing of one of their sons, Mr. Chukwuemeka Nwobu, and wounding of Mr. Michael Osita and others over a land dispute between them and people of Dagama Ikem Ifite village were brought to justice.

They said that their appeal became necessary because of alleged underground moves by some influential people in Dagama Ikem Ifite to stop the investigation and prosecution of the case.

According to the petition written and signed by the community lawyer, Okey Anwadike, and made available to DAILY INDEPENDENT in Nnewi weekend, the people of Akamanator said they have a running dispute over a piece of land called 'Aguomelle' with Dagama Ikem Ifite people,

adding the ownership of the land was awarded to them in a Supreme Court judgment on March 8, this year.

They stated that the people of Dagama Ikem Ifite invaded the land when they were surveying it, brandishing dangerous weapons like guns, machetes, axes and others and attacked them; shot one Mr. Chukwuemeka Nwobu, a promising youth of the village, who was rushed to a hospital where he later died. They added that others were wounded in the attack, including Mr. Michael Osita, who received a serious wound on his lips.

Akamanator people said that they were taken by surprise when they saw Dagama people brandishing machetes, guns, axes and other dangerous weapons and started asking them why they should be on the land.

Part of the petition reads, "Immediately after this attack, we rushed to Otuocha police division, the division in charge of the area, but the police in Otuocha, instead of recording the case, told us to go and treat the injured first and come back for a peace talk but later on changed their position when we came back the following day to report that one of the injured, Mr. Chukwuemeka Nwobu, had died in the hospital where he was admitted.

"It was then that they recorded the case and later transferred it to the homicide section of the Anambra State Police Command, Awka. We are not comfortable with the hurried transfer of the case from Anambra State to the Office of the Inspector General of Police. We are hearing from reliable sources in Dagama village, Ikem Ifite, that certain well-connected people have been bragging openly that the case will not see the light of the day now that it has been brought to Abuja.

"We have nobody except God; that is why we are appealing to the Inspector General of Police to intervene and ensure that perpetrators of this dastardly act are fished out and prosecuted."

Speaking also on the issue, Chief Amobi Nzedigwe, an ex-officio member of the executive of the village and Mr. Onyeka Ezinna, a member of a peace committee representing Achalaogu Akamanator village in Nando, respectively, appealed to the police boss and human rights community to intervene and ensure that the course of justice was not derailed by some powerful people, stating that the people of the village were waiting when justice would be done in the case, which is the investigation and prosecution of murderers of Nwobu.

Reacting to the issue, CC Ofoegbunam, the legal adviser of Dagama Ikem Ifite, said the portion of the land the Akamanator village won in court was different from the one in dispute, noting that the judgment referred to only a specified area of the land which was verged red in Amaegwene Akamanator survey plan.

He stated that Amaegwene Akamanator people won the verged portion of the land after a prolonged legal tussle, which spanned from High Court, Appeal Court to Supreme Court and that they the people of Dagama village vacated the portion of the land for them.

He stressed that even some members of Dagama village who were living on the said portion of land vacated it for Amaegwene people of Akamanator.

He stated that on getting the judgment, Amaegwene people of Akamanator, instead of staying on the portion ceded to them by the court decided to trespass over the larger portion of the land.

He said this prompted Dagama people to sue them in Otuocha customary court for trespass in a suit NOCCT/6/97 entitled Elias Ekwunife and others Vs Ojiakor Ekwealor and others, which he said the people of Dagama village won.

“The late Chief Alphonsus Anwuobi who is from Akamanator, who gave evidence in that suit at the customary court confirmed that the disputed area is different from the portion they won in court in his evidence”, the lawyer said.

He noted that Amaegwene people of Akamanator after the judgment vacated the said portion but re-entered and started farming, building structures up to more that 66 percent of the land when crisis arose in Ikem Ifite village over autonomous status granted to them by then Anambra State government.

He said that after this, that the people of Dagama village sued them again in suit no OT/14/2008 entitled Chief Isaac Omasi and others Vs John Nwabata and others for trespass and damages and secured an injunction restraining Akamanator people and their agents from entering the said portion of land for whatever purposes, adding that the injunction was challenged by Amaegwene people of Akamanator in a motion brought by them in suit no OT/38M/2071 before Justice V.N Umeh who refused to vacate the restraining order.

The lawyer said, "Our people of Dagama continued farming on their land without disturbances but surprisingly in recent time our people started noticing some beacon outside the area they have built up and we initiated a contempt proceedings against some members of Amaegwene and the judgment was reserved for 13th March 2018 but surprisingly again on the 8th day of March, 2018, some people from our village went to farm but they were attacked and wounded."

On allegation that his village was trying to thwart the investigation and prosecution of the case, Ofoegbunam said that immediately after the attack, the community reported it to Otuocha police division but the divisional police officer for the station signaled the Anambra State Police Commissioner, who ordered him to raise up a peace committee to mediate between the two villages.

He stated that the Amaegwene people of Akamanator while the matter was going on wrote to the state Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of Anambra State police command to take over the case and that the Dagama people on suspicion that they would not get justice decided to write to the Office of Inspector General of Police in Abuja to take over the matter which the Inspector General did.

Contacted to confirm the story, the Anambra State police spokesperson, ASP Nkiru Nwode, refused to pick repeated calls put to her and text messages on the matter but sources from the Criminal Investigation Department of the Anambra State Police command, Awka, confirmed that the matter was reported to them.

The source said they were about to commence action on it when they received an order from the Office of the Inspector General of Police in Abuja that the matter be transferred to them.