

# Two killed in Ebonyi cult clash

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***By Ogochukwu Anioke, Abakaliki***

Two persons have been killed in cult clashes, which broke out at Afikpo South local government area of Ebonyi State.

Irked by the incident, Governor David Umahi on Wednesday ordered security agencies to fish out the perpetrators and prosecute them.

The Nation gathered the second victim was killed in the area on Wednesday morning in a reprisal attack.

One Onu Ukpai Chima had been killed in Owutu community in the area on Sunday as two rival cult groups clashed in the area.

The killing allegedly led to the raid of hideouts of the cultists by Police on Tuesday night.

But after the Police left, a cousin of the late Chima, whose name was given as Ukegbu, reportedly went on a reprisal attack and killed one Raphael Chijioke alleged to be a member of the cult group that allegedly killed Chima.

Reacting to the killings on Wednesday, Umahi described the killings as unacceptable.

He urged security agencies to move in an arrest anybody involved in the killings no matter how highly placed they may be.

"The killings in Afikpo south is not acceptable. If we can solve this problem once and for all, it will be good".

"As the Governor of the state, I cannot take side. Security agents should go and do investigation and arrest whoever that is involved, get the person arrested and do proper investigation.

"Take the people involved in the killings to court. I will sign any paper for execution, I will do it to prove a point in Afikpo south," he stated.

The Governor said the killings have political undertones lamenting the loss of lives in the clashes.

"What is going on in Afikpo south is not acceptable, it is not acceptable. These lives that are being lost are not chickens. I know very well, it is political squabbles. We have it so much in Ohaukwu but God has brought it down".

"I have ordered a thorough and comprehensive investigations of the killings in Afikpo south and anybody is arrestable. This nonsense must stop! How can we continue to talk about killings in that place, it must stop! I need to be briefed on daily basis about this", he said

Meanwhile, the Chairman of Afikpo South Local Government Council, Eni Uduma Chima has condemned the cult activities leading to the death of Chima and Chijioke.

The Chairman in statement by spokesman of the Council, Anderson Ozuma said he has made Statements/Reports to appropriate authorities in his efforts to contain the escalation of cult activities and violence in Owutu Edda.

"He has received and forwarded reports/information of the whereabouts of most of the cultists who perpetrated that reprehensible act of 3rd May 2020".

"He volunteered to personally join operatives of the Anti-kidnapping (A.K.) Squad of the Nigeria Police Force in the night of 5th May 2020 alongside other Stakeholders in security, which movement led to the arrest of 4 suspected cultists in the morning of 6th May 2020 who are alleged to be involved in the killing of late Ukpai".

Eni said that it was unfortunate that after the departure of the said A.K. operatives this around 03:00 a.m. a person generally said to be a cousin of the late Onu Ukpai Chima whose name was given simply as Ukaegbu allegedly went on a revenge mission in one of the hideouts of the cultists which was not known to the Squad as at the time of the raid.

“He was alleged to have shot and killed one Raphael Chijioke suspected to be a member of the cult group that allegedly killed his own cousin on 3rd May 2020”.

The Chairman expressed regrets that despite the efforts and presence of security operatives and himself between last night and early hours of this morning, such incident could still happen.

He revealed that the person who is said to be the cousin of the deceased Onu Ukpai Chima has been arrested and transferred to the Police Headquarters Abakaliki.

The Chairman called on Town Union Executives of the hotspots of these cult activities and hideouts to rise to the occasion and join the Law Enforcement Agencies in the search for the cultists who are said to have remained in Owutu.

He also called on members of the community to be calm and volunteer useful information that can lead to the whereabouts of the cultists who are now on the run.

Mr Eni also pleaded with the family members of the deceased persons to hunt for sensitive information regarding the whereabouts of the suspected cultists and killers of their loved ones and to shun taking laws into their hands by way of revenge or reprisals.

Commissioner of Police, Awosola Awotinde confirmed the killings and arrests of the suspects