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Pandemonium in Abia communities as army clash with gunmen

...Six soldiers, one ESN member feared killed

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Information gathered by *our reporter* has it that the fierce exchange of gunfire between the gunmen and soldiers has caused exodus of residents and indigenes of Elu, Amangwu, Ebem and Amaekpu, Ohafia LGA from their respective communities to neighbouring villages in order to avoid being caught in the crossfire.

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A source who spoke to *our correspondent* on the condition of anonymity stated that many male youths in the community who feared being innocently whisked away by soldiers and other security agents have left their homes in the village for other places for safety in the state.

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"We learnt that some boys believed to be members of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) came to the popular Ebem Motor Park and started shooting and later left.

"Soldiers from 14 Brigade Ohafia whose command headquarters is located in the area later came and went after them.

"We learnt that the unknown gunmen killed six soldiers and since that time, it is hell on earth. There have been sporadic gunshots from all corners.

"We have suffered all manner of intimidation from soldiers. Some of our kinsmen have relocated to Uzuakoli, Umuahia, Aba and anywhere they think that is safer for them. We are in the village but our right to movement is determined by soldiers.



"Marriage ceremonies billed to take place any time soon have been shifted indefinitely. We learnt that at Elu, soldiers went to market and started pursuing people.

"A lot of houses have been burnt at Amangwu Ohafia community. They said that members of ESN were using the houses as their hideout; that I can't validate. You need to call anyone from Amangwu to validate such claims. But what I can tell you right now is that Ohafia is on fire," said the source.

An indigene of Amangwu Ohafia who spoke from his hideout confirmed the invasion of his community by soldiers of 14 Brigade, Ohafia, with the claim that members of ESN that killed their personnel were hiding in Amangwu community.

The source who disclosed that they later started hearing heavy gunfire in their village in the early hours of Friday, confirmed the burning of people's houses, arrest and indiscriminate harassment of indigenes of their community by the soldiers.

"I don't know the actual number. Some reports were saying six soldiers were killed, others said four and some ESN members were killed in the heavy gunfire. But the truth is that the Amangwu community, including Elu, Ebem and Amaepku, are all on fire.

"We are begging Senator Orji Uzor Kalu and other federal and state lawmakers to come to our rescue."

Army spokesman, Capt. Dauda Illiya, could not take calls placed to his mobile line, while the Police Public Relations Officer in the state, SP Geoffrey Ogbonn, could not confirm the report.

According to Ogbonna, he is yet-to-be informed of such development in Ohafia Local Government Area.



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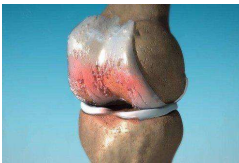
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