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Alleged witchcraft: Cost of autopsy stalls investigations into murder —Police

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AFTER several arrests following the killing of five people by youths in Ndon Nwong community, Odukpani Local Government Area of Cross River State, over alleged witchcraft, the Cross River Police Command has said that the cost of carrying out autopsy on victims is stalling investigation on the matter.

Five persons were reportedly hacked to death out of the 15 people that were originally taken to the forest to be murdered over allegations of witchcraft.

The tactical unit of the state police command had made a second visit to the community in company of operation Akpakwu's Sting Unit for further findings, after several

arrests earlier made. However, the police in the state said the cost of bringing in health workers, including a pathologist, had become a stumbling block to the investigation due to the huge amount of money involved in carrying out the post mortem exercise.

Findings reveal that those missing include Micheal Roberts (62), Mrs Ikwo Edet Eyo (65), Chief Etim Ekpeyong (85), Madam Eyo (61) and one Mrs Edet (63) while the corpse of Nkoyo Ekpenyong (46) was also found in the river increasing the number of victims to six.

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) in the state command, SP Irene Ugbo confirmed that investigation was ongoing, but added that there was an urgent need to carry out autopsy on those murdered in

cold blood

The PPRO said that the job required a lot of hands, especially health workers, that would dig up the graves, fumigate the location and a pathologist that will carry out the post mortem.

She added that the police alone cannot bear the cost as the procedure was quite expensive.

"We know that there are organisations that can assist the police in making the process easier and faster, we urgently need an expert (pathologist) to carry out autopsy before we can proceed on the investigation," she said.

Meanwhile, an alarm had been raised by a security source, who pleaded anonymity over the attempt by some highly placed individuals from the area, whom he alleged, were trying to interfere with the police investiga-

tions.

"There are efforts to transfer the case to state CID, removing it from the Unit (ACKS) that had been on the matter from inception which will invariably open loopholes for the suspects who are at large to escape justice," the source claimed.

Reacting, SP Ugbo said nothing of sort could happen as the Inspector General of Police, human rights organisations, both within and outside the country, are also interested in the matter.

"There won't be any form of compromise on the part of the police, the SP Awodi led unit are professionals and will handle the matter in adherence with international best practices and there won't be any form of interference whatsoever by anyone," the PPRO said.

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