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Farmers kill six vigilantes in Ogun forest reserves

By Ademola Oni, Abeokuta, Published: Friday, 26 Feb 2010

A A A A A

The efforts of the Ogun State Government to re-claim its forest has met a major challenge in illegal occupants, mostly farmers, who have killed six members of a vigilance group engaged by the state to guard its forest reserves in Ijebu East Local Government. The murdered vigilantes were reportedly on patrol of some enclaves in Omo Forest Reserve, along with 14 others, were allegedly shot dead. While some of the victims were reportedly injected with poisonous substance, others were forced to drink the poison by the attackers. Speaking at a press conference in Abeokuta on Thursday, the state Commissioner for Forestry, Alhaji Alli Ajibode, described the killings, which occurred on Tuesday last week, as one of the numerous excesses of the illegal occupants in the state reserves. Ajibode explained that the 20-man vigilance group was on patrol of Laagan enclave last week when the six were killed while others, who escaped the attack, were still on danger list in some unnamed hospitals. The commissioner equally said one of the members of the vigilance group was still missing. He accused the illegal occupants of the forest reserves and some unnamed traditional rulers in the area of being responsible for the tragedy. He said, "At the time of the constitution of the area into a forest reserve, only 50 of such enclaves were recognised. It is sad to inform you that as at today, there are over 400 of such settlements created illegally with the connivance of some Obas, Baales and other prominent citizens of the area." Ajibode calculated that the state lost over N4bn to the activities of the illegal farmers and timber fellers in 2009. He also said artefacts and other valuables were destroyed in attempts by the illegal occupants to establish cocoa plantations in the reserves. Ajibode named Oloke-Alli, Laaro, Laagan, Likosi, Erinla Bashiru, Eleyele, Lapete, Ajelanwa, Ajebo and Lasan as some of the settlements where the illegal occupants had acquired arms to fight government agents and forest guards. The State Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Muiyiwa Adejobi, confirmed that the incident had been reported to the police but said he could not give details of the situation as he was not in his office.

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