

Imo community boils as gunmen continue killing spree

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Ohaji-Edema

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The crisis in Assa community, in the Ohaji-Edema Local Government Area of Imo State, is not abating as gunmen, suspected to be cult members, reportedly killed two persons on Monday.

This is coming after *PUNCH Metro* reported that nine persons were killed penultimate week in the area, including a father of three, Vitalis Uwalaka.

Our correspondent also reported that the crisis was caused by the crude oil deposit in the community.

Youths, who belonged to different cults, were said to have engaged in supremacy battle over royalties paid by multinational oil companies operating in the community.

PUNCH Metro learnt that the community was presently inhabited by elderly and sickly indigenes, while most residents had fled to neighbouring towns and villages.

A community leader, Celestine Ogbuji, told our correspondent that the security agencies were not doing enough to handle the situation.

He said, "Things are getting worse in our community. The cult killings have taken a new dimension since the past four months. They have been killing people, burning houses and raping women. There is no market in that place again.

"On Monday, two persons were killed. One is Mr. Ekero, but I don't know the name of the other victim. For the past four months, at least 17 people have been killed."

Ogbuji decried the attitude of the police, saying a team deployed in the area in March left after spending a few days.

He appealed to the government to deploy military men in the area.

Another indigene, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the community had been deserted.

"People have started leaving Assa community because of the killings. As I speak with you, I have moved to Ohuba town.

"It is unfortunate that the community that makes Imo an oil-producing state has been seriously torn by cult killings. And despite the oil, there is no infrastructure or any social amenity in the town except for few individual efforts," he said.

A member of the Imo State House of Assembly, Emmanuel Orie, told our correspondent on the telephone that the Assembly had started an enquiry into the matter.

He said, "There is a crisis in that community. There have been a lot of killings, which is affecting the growth of the community. As a member of the state Assembly representing the area, I have moved a motion on the floor of the House. We will address the crisis."

The state Commissioner of Police, Taiwo Lakanu, did not pick his calls and had yet to reply to a text message sent to his telephone line. **Copyright PUNCH.**

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