

Scores feared killed as soldiers attack Anambra communities

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Anambra State Governor, Prof. Charles Chukwuma Soludo

Residents of Ogbaru community in the Ogbaru Local Government Area of Anambra State have lamented alleged military invasion of their communities.

They accused the soldiers of killing their youths in the guise of fighting crime and criminality in the area.

Ogbaru is one of the communities that curfew was imposed upon because of its volatile nature and high crime rate.

The residents' lamentation followed alleged killings on Tuesday and Wednesday at Ossomala, Umunankwo and Obeagwa communities by the Army.

An elder in the community, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the military personnel went from house to house and killed scores of youths.

He said, "Troops of the Nigerian military comprising the Navy and the Army have killed dozens of innocent citizens in their productive age bracket in Ogbaru.

"The deployment of the military personnel in this area began in the evening of Tuesday during which they claimed to be looking for unknown gunmen that recently laid siege to the area.

"The soldiers turned their guns on the defenceless and unarmed natives and others while abandoning the forests that are the hideouts of the unknown gunmen located inside a big river/swamp forest of Obene-Ochuche/Umuazu/Okija divided by the Ulasi River."

Unverified viral videos of the alleged attack showed bodies shot in the foreheads, hearts, stomachs, back and reproductive organ region littered several locations of the community.

The soldiers were also accused of invading several 'sacred' places and destroying them.

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A security analyst and Chairman, Board of Trustees, International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law, Mr Emeka Umeagbalasi, in a statement, described the killings as genocide.

He said, "No doubt that Ogbaru is one of the council areas presently under the grip of syndicated criminal entities engaging in several nefarious activities including abductions, killings, armed robberies and ransom demands as well as counterfeiting ESN trademarked modes of operation by attacking security operatives and government facilities.

"But latest findings by Intersociety showed that the criminal entities are camped inside a big river/swamp forest of Obene-Ochuche/Umuazu/Okija divided by Ulasi River. The area covers Ogbaru communities of Atani, Amiyi, Umuazu, Ochuche, Akiri-Ozuzu, Osamari, Umunankwo and Ogwuanaocha.

"Consequently, on the night of Tuesday, June 28, 2022, over 20 trucks of soldiers, arms and ammunition were mobilised and the areas were invaded in an aimless war grade operation and instead of the military personnel including Naval and Army Personnel from Ogbaru Naval Base and Onitsha 302 Artillery Regiment going into the affected forest camps, they let loose on innocent locals, shooting them at close range, including foreheads, chests, manhood and other terminal regions.

"Several or dozens were killed in the end as you might have seen in the videos and pictures of the aftermath of the invasion.

"The rampaging military personnel also went into villages and broke homes at late night, forcing scores to be killed and other defenseless natives of the affected communities to escape through River Niger and others.

"Our findings further showed that the slain were members of the defenseless locals and have nothing to do with unknown gunmen, who the Nigerian security forces have severally and publicly acknowledged to bear charms preventing bullet penetration.

"Also, no armed person could have been shot at such close range and killed easily that way at his terminal region without dodging and stiff defensive resistance."

The state police spokesman, Tochukwu Ikenga, could not be reached for his reaction as he did not take his calls or respond to text messages sent to his phone.

Efforts to reach the Chief Press Secretary to the Governor, Christian Aburime, were also abortive as he did not take his calls.