

# 70 corpses, skeletons uncovered near Abia cattle market – Gov

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Abia State Governor, Alex Otti.

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The Abia State Governor, Alex Otti, says 50 decomposing corpses, including 20 headless ones, as well as countless skeletons were discovered by security operatives during a raid of the forest around the Lokpanta Cattle Market in the Umunneochi axis of the Enugu-Port Harcourt Expressway.

According to the governor, it was also discovered that the cattle market was being used by kidnappers as ransom-collection point.

Otti made the revelation on Sunday during the second edition of his monthly media chat in Umuahia, the state capital.

He vowed that no inch of the state land mass would be left to criminals in line with his administration's commitment to protect the lives and property of residents and visitors to the state.

He insisted that the resolve of the state to make the cattle market a daily market was not targeted at any particular tribe in the country, rather it was aimed at revamping the security architecture of the market and its host community.

He said, "We have taken a stand to provide adequate security to Abia citizens and visitors because we know that no government can succeed in the face of insecurity. This government will not get involved in supporting criminals or allow them to occupy any part of the state.

"When we decided to occupy the Lokpanta Cattle Market in the Umunneochi Local Government Area of the state, we discovered 50 dead bodies, 20 headless dead bodies, men, women and children and uncountable skeletons. We also discovered that ransoms paid to kidnappers were usually dropped close to the market.

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"But it was unfortunate that some people misinterpreted our action to mean that we asked the northerners trading in the market to leave the state. After our interactions with leaders of the northern community, we told them that anyone who was not in support of the moves we were making to secure the state must be a criminal. They saw reasons with us and quickly reversed the quit notice they issued to Igbo in the North.

“That’s why we have decided to make the market a daily market, people can go to the market and do their business and go home at the end of the day. The market will not be only a cattle market again, but it will have other sections for other goods like every other market.

“Those who live inside the market will now live among other people in the state outside the market.”

Meanwhile, the apex Igbo socio-cultural organisation, Ohanaeze Ndigbo Worldwide, appealed to the northern leadership in the cattle market to “cooperate with Governor Otti to fish out the criminal elements that dent the image of the genuine traders amongst them.”

Speaking with one of our correspondents, Ohanaeze National Publicity Secretary, Dr Alex Ogbonnia, dismissed the report that Otti had displaced northerners from the Umunneochi Cattle Market.

“Ohanaeze recognises the age-long trading relationship between the North and the Igbo and urges all and sundry to take advantage of Governor Otti’s security initiatives for the interest of all,” he said.