

Fears spread in Enugu communities as gunmen kill four mourners

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Fulani herdsmen

By Raphael Ede

Fear has gripped residents of Nimbo community in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State following the gruesome murder of four members of the community by suspected armed herdsmen.

The victims, identified as Okeh Oruku, Okeh Chukwuebuka, Julius Odiegwu, and Gabriel Ezea, were reportedly killed late Sunday night.

Residents, who spoke to our correspondent, said the suspected herders attacked mourners at Ugwuijoro Nimbo community killing the four people instantly.

Tables and chairs could be seen scattered in the compound where the mourners had gathered, with lifeless villagers also seen in the pool of their blood in a video of the incident seen by our correspondent.

Although some residents said four slain corpses had been recovered, the community has formed search parties as so many people could not be accounted for after the attack.

One the residents, Chijoke Okunna told our correspondent that seven people were seriously inflicted with machete cuts.

The incident, Okunna said has left the community deserted as the residents abandoned their homes for fear of more attacks.

A member of the community, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of attack, said a driver with the Enugu State Transport Company from the Nimbo community was also shot dead in the Opanda area three days earlier before the Sunday attack.

The source also revealed that there are many herdsman camps around Ugboda, Adani, and Opanda in the council area because of the thick forests in those communities.

The source equally decried the absence of police presence in Nimbo and some of the flashpoints of the herders' attacks, adding that the villagers had been abandoned to their fate.

"The herders are still coming into Uzo-Uwani with their trailer loads of cattle. I don't know who is giving them the morale. They have even started destroying farms with their animals. I don't know what Uzo-Uwani people have done to deserve these inhuman treatments," the resident said.

A police source, who was a member of the rapid response team dispatched to the community, told our correspondent that the entire community had been deserted.

Meanwhile, the Enugu State Police has confirmed the attack.

The command's spokesperson, DSP Daniel Ndukwe, who confirmed the incident, however, could not immediately provide details.

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He said, "Please I am putting something together on the attack. You get it soonest."

As at the time of filing this report in the evening police were yet to provide details of the attack.

It should be recalled that in April 2016, Fulani herdsman attacked the Nimbo community and killed at least 14 people.

The Governor of Enugu State, Dr. Peter Mbah, visited the community on Monday and described the recent attack as unacceptable, vowing that the government would track down the attackers and bring them to book.

"Let me assure you that enough is enough. I don't think that we would allow our hospitality to be taken for granted. We expect people, who have come to mingle with us, to also play by the rules and laws of our land.

"I don't think that we really do have any reason to exist as a government if we cannot guarantee the safety of our people because the primary purpose of government is to guarantee the security and the welfare of its citizens. So, a situation where our people would go to bed with their two eyes open must end. And it must end immediately.

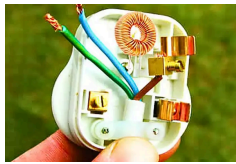
"I want to assure you that we are going to deploy everything within our powers; and I mean everything: the law, the forces, everything that is necessary in order for us to guarantee your security.

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“We are truly pained by such dastardly killing by people who trespass, come into the locality of our people, who are living quietly within their environment, and open fire on them. That is inexcusable and unacceptable, and we are going to identify, track these culprits, pursue them wherever they are, capture them, and ensure that we bring them to justice,” the governor said.

Speaking on behalf of the community, the President-General of Nimbo, Mr. Clement Akachukwu, said their attackers had preyed on their community for decades due to the remoteness of Nimbo.

While thanking Governor Mbah for his prompt response, he called on the government to strengthen the Nimbo Neighbourhood Watch and Forest Guards to complement the security agencies.

“You can see for yourself that Nimbo is living on the outskirts of Enugu State. We live directly in the border area, and they come in any time and kill and go back.

“It has repeated itself again and now, not only one person, but four were killed. About two months ago, they kidnapped a number of people, but they were rescued, although the kidnappers escaped. It has been like this for years, even before I was born.

“So, we only need one thing. We have community vigilantes. If only they can be strengthened and if more can be brought and paid well to do the work because we need 24-hour vigilance here. These attackers know all the routes in the villages and bushes so well. We need our local vigilantes to be strengthened because they can match them. The width and length of our farmlands are so massive” Akachukwu stated.