

Eight killed in Imo inter-cult clash

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File photo of a scene of cult clash

By Chigozie Uzosike

No fewer than eight persons have been killed in an inter-cult clash in the Awarra and Ochia communities of Ohaji/Egbema Local Government Area of Imo State.

A community leader who spoke to *PUNCH Metro* on condition of anonymity on Thursday lamented the inability of the state government to provide security to check the deadly onslaught of the cultists in the communities.

He said, “Eight people have so far been killed in this clash by the cultists here. Out of the eight lives reported dead in the past weeks, five were members of the cult groups, while three community members slumped and died when they heard the sound of the guns. One person who was abducted has yet to be seen.”

He urged the Nigeria Police and Imo State Government to intervene by making sure that those who ran away from the communities to neighbouring communities out of fear of being killed return home.

“Our people have become displaced and taken refuge in churches in neighbouring communities like Assa, Obile, Obosima, and Umuokanne and they’re dying because they have no food, no access to their homes and farmlands. Imagine people living outside their homes in this economic hardship.”

“To ensure that peace returns to the areas, the communities of Awara and Ochia have constituted a committee to come out with measures to restore peace.”

He expressed hope that the committee would do a good job in the restoration of lasting peace in the area, saying, “We need peace to return to our communities so that people can lead their normal lives.”

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A youth leader who pleaded anonymity because of security concerns told *PUNCH Metro* that the clash was a supremacy battle between contending groups over the control of proceeds from oil companies operating in the

communities.

He said, “It is a battle by two groups over who will control the proceeds of the money that come to Awarra and Ochia communities by the oil companies that operate there. One group is controlled by a man called Acid while the other is led by Achis, seeking to dislodge it.”

He confirmed that no fewer than four people had been killed in the clashes but noted that normalcy had been restored following the intervention of the government.

When contacted for his reaction, the Imo State Police Public Relations Officer, Henry Okoye, said the security agencies had been receiving complaints about attacks by some criminal elements in the areas.

“The police have been doing a lot to restore peace in Ohaji. The Commissioner of Police has engaged in a series of meetings with stakeholders of Ohaji. We, in collaboration with other security personnel, have enhanced security strategy.

“Ohaji’s security also lies with the people of the area because there’s no way we can actually get it right without the maximum cooperation of people.”

“The Commissioner of Police has personally visited Ohaji. The cooperation with the stakeholders is yielding results because we have made several arrests. The security of Ohaji has improved since the current police boss came. We are doing everything possible to restore peace and order in the area.”

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