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Ritual killers invade Enugu community

Our Reporter

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● Butcher 75-year-old man, 8-month pregnant wife

From ALOYSIUS ATTAH

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Tension has now enveloped the entire Okpowa Okpo community in Enugu Ezike, Igbo – Eze North Local Government Area of Enugu State following fears that the town has been invaded by ritual killers. This is the aftermath of a horrific killing of a 75-year-old man and his pregnant wife coming on the heels of a similar murder of another pregnant woman.

The ambience of peace was first shattered in Okpo community on the night of 26th September 2013 following the gruesome murder of Mabel Udaya and the alleged removal of some of her vital body parts by suspected ritualists. While that was yet to be resolved, the vipers struck again on the night of Thursday, 6th February 2014, killing Ogbonna Ossai Idoko and his pregnant wife, Victoria while their blood was drained in a bowl.

Saturday Sun gathered that the lifeless bodies of Ogbonna and Victoria were discovered in the afternoon of Friday, 7th February by a neighbour who visited their apartment to inquire why the couple's three-year-old daughter was crying. The neighbour, on entering the room, was confronted with the gory sight of Victoria's butchered body and he raised the alarm which attracted other members of the community. While they were still wondering what could have happened to the woman, they were again confronted with the butchered body of her husband lying on the floor in another room.

It was discovered that the dead couple had their throats slashed like goats while there were drops of blood in the two rooms they slept, thereby fuelling suspicion that their blood was drained and taken away by their killers. Both Ogbonna and Victoria were described as poor residents who earned their living by engaging in menial jobs and picking of broom sticks to sell.

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Confusion everywhere

When news of the gruesome murder filtered into the community, people were at first confused on what to do. *Saturday Sun* gathered that they reported the matter to the police at the Igbo-Eze North Division from where detectives visited the scene and later evacuated the couple's corpses to Enugu-Ezike General Hospital where they were embalmed and the foetus from the woman's womb removed before depositing them in the mortuary. Members of the community's Neighborhood Watch were also rounded up by the police and transferred to Enugu headquarters for questioning.

On Monday, 10th February, 2014, women in the community and some male delegates stormed the Enugu State Police Command Headquarters with the foetus from the murdered woman's womb in black attire to register their displeasure over the strange happenings in their community.

It was gathered that though the protesters couldn't have audience with the Commissioner of Police, they were told by some top police officers who attended to them to write a formal petition to the CP demanding a thorough investigation of the incident.

The next day, Monday, February 11, over 500 women took over the major road in the community forcing traders in the village market to close shop abruptly.

Led by a Catholic nun, Rev. Sister Martina Oforka who lives at Umuagbedo Agu, Amachalla, a neighbouring community to Okpo, the women challenged the men and leaders of the community to do something and confront whatever was threatening the peace and safety of the people. They chanted songs of protest and threatened to take over the security of the community if the men have lost their manliness. They also alleged that the perpetrators of the evil acts are not strangers but members of the community. They said the men, expected to speak up and have the ritualists apprehended, have been afraid to act.

It took the spirited efforts of the member representing the community in the Enugu State House of Assembly, Hon. Mich Onyeze, the Chairman, Igbo-Eze North Local Government Area, Hon. Bonaventure Onuh and the traditional ruler of the community, Igwe Patrick Okenyi to prevail on Rev. Sister Martina who in turn talked to the women in the language they understood before they could retreat.

Time to bell the cat

Saturday Sun gathered that soon after the women's uprising, the traditional ruler of the community, summoned all the stakeholders to the home of the oldest man in Okpo, Onyishi Ali nwa Abba Omada, to deliberate on how to tackle the problem at hand and find a lasting solution to the circle of evil ravaging the community. While at the meeting, an insider who craved anonymity, told *Saturday Sun* that the stakeholders signed an agreement that all those fingered in the spate of killings must be fished out and punished according to the law. The gathering also noted that the father of Cosmas Itodo, a suspect still being detained in connection with Mabel's murder, has been going about recording the conversation of some elders in the community.

On the evening of Thursday, 13th February, following a tip-off, a combined team of policemen and operatives of the State Security Service stormed the community and arrested two suspects, Ejiofor Eze popularly known as Upau and Jude Agada while some others on the wanted list of the police fled the community. It was learnt that the arrest of Ejiofor alias Upau was as a result of the alleged revelation by Gebechi, the three-year-old daughter of the murdered couple implicating the suspect.

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When *Saturday Sun* visited the homestead of the murdered couple last Monday, the sight was a pathetic one. In their decrepit two-room building with falling windows and doors, some women were seen consoling the children of the deceased who sat on bare floor amid dust and boiling heat. It was gathered that the late Ogbonna, aged about 75, lost his first wife years ago and has remained a widower for some time until he remarried few years back. The first wife bore him seven children; five males and two females while the second wife murdered alongside had the three-year-old Gebechi and was seven months pregnant, expecting the second baby before the evil men struck.

Ogbonna's fourth son, Emmanuel gave an insight into the pitiable condition of the family.

"I think the killers knew the condition of our family and decided to do this to us because they felt that nobody will fight for us but I know that God will fight for us. I'm a hustler in Lagos doing *okada* job to survive. I'm married to a woman from Ondo State and we have five children, all grown up now but they have never been to this village before because of the situation. The first son of my father died at a very tender age, the second got lost without any trace till today while the third ran mad. I'm the fourth while the fifth also died last year.

The two females among us are married to poor people in the village too. I pray that my father and step mother's brutal killings should put an end to our ugly situation. I wonder what these poor people could have done to warrant their gruesome murder but I leave all to God who is the one we hope on to face tomorrow as long as He lives", he stated.

Okpo people for mass return

Findings by *Saturday Sun* revealed that several indigenes of Okpo residing in Nsukka, Onitsha, Port Harcourt, Lagos and other parts of the country returned home last Sunday.

A source in the community said: "Our people in the village are not happy over what has been going on and it's like the prominent people from the community have realised this and they now want to act. We know the people fingered in this evil act and we just believe that this time that some of them have been arrested, the security agents must ensure that they are prosecuted accordingly while the fleeing suspects will also be apprehended.

The police should not bow under any pressure from anybody from the village no matter how influential who may try to get the suspects freed without a conclusive investigation and dispensation of justice to avoid a repeat of what happened when Mabel was murdered."

In an interview with the traditional ruler of Okpo, Igwe Patrick Okenyi, he acknowledged that the present happening in the community is a challenge to his kingdom but expressed optimism that the community will definitely get to the root of the problem and come out victorious.

"This is my community and I cannot run away from it.

Bloodshed is not in our character too and I believe we are getting to the end of the evil wind. If I don't struggle to free my people from the clutches of evil men, it means I've lost track, so I must stand for justice and truth and definitely, we shall succeed in the end," the traditional ruler said.

For Sister Martina, who is not an indigene of the community but has decided to fight the battle even at the risk of her life, there is also no going back.

While also reflecting on the situation so far, she urged the women and other right thinking people of the community to stand up against evil. She expressed gratitude to Barrister Nkiru Ugwu-Nwabueze, the Chairperson of International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Enugu State branch for her interest to ensure that justice prevails in their struggle.

Meanwhile, the three year old girl, Gebechi left behind by the murdered couple has joined the list of about 52 other motherless and indigent children under the care of Sister Martina.

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The Police Public Relations Officer, Enugu State Command confirmed the arrest of the two suspects and said the police will ensure a diligent and professional handling of the matter.

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Owerri March 1, 2014 at 2:33 am - Reply

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Ify March 1, 2014 at 6:14 am - Reply

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Aniagu March 1, 2014 at 8:42 am - Reply

FG please give Nsukka zone their Adada state, to enable Enugu state have a rest of mind. Ritual killing is not in the blood of Enugu people.



kola amodu March 1, 2014 at 10:23 am - Reply

Aniagu, is Enugu not part of jewsland again. U guys are comedians. We all know that when it comes to money, an average naija jews will use his/her kids for rituals. This is de only tribe in de world who will rather love to have money n wealth for just one week n if death can come after that, it is alright with de jews. Is this de way u will run ur "BIAFRA"? Owerri Bastard, i hope one day ur jewish people will use u for money ritual, at least that u would have contributed something positive to ur community. In it.