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## How widow was murdered over land in Ebonyi

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BY OUR REPORTER ON JANUARY 20, 2016

LIFELINE

From **Emmanuel Uzor**, Abakaliki

In the past eight months, there has been considerable sadness in the homestead of Mrs. Chinyere Itigwe, a widow and mother of eight in Ebonyi State. Ironically, she met her untimely end in the hands of those who were supposed to be her guardians and relatives.

She died on Monday, January 4, nine months after she was brutally battered, allegedly in the hands of some of her husband's relatives.

Mrs. Itigwe, a 40-year-old woman from Onuafor-Nkomoro, Ezza North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, had no premonition that the incident of March 28 would trigger her demise.

While Nigerians were busy at the polling centres to elect their new president and members of the National Assembly last year, tragedy struck in the household of the late Emmanuel Itigwe. It was gathered that the man's surviving siblings allegedly engaged his widow in a bloody fight that left Mrs. Itigwe seriously injured and bedridden for many months. She finally gave up the ghost at the Federal Teaching Hospital (FETHA II) in Abakaliki, the Ebonyi State capital.

Daily Sun gathered that Mrs. Itigwe was allegedly attacked by the relations of her late husband on March 28, 2015 during a fight over a piece of land. The deceased insisted that the land belonged to her late husband and the eight children he left behind.

During the fight, the deceased allegedly sustained various degrees of injuries in her head and other parts of her body.

According to one of her children, Ifeanyi, his late mother was a peaceful woman, who had never engaged in

any fight of any sort until that fateful day when his uncles and others now at large laid a siege for her and

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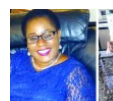
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attacked her with machetes suspected to have been poisoned.

“My mother was killed over land and economic trees, belonging to our late father. She believed that the piece of land was the only thing our father left behind with which she largely depended on to train us in school. We have been suffering, living in abject poverty but our late mother kept giving us hope that one day, it would be well. That was until her death in the hands of my uncles, who were supposed to protect her from external aggression.”

He disclosed that the suspects, including his five uncles, who have been arrested and another suspect now at large, had insisted that the deceased must stop encroaching onto the said land and the economic trees that were in large numbers on the land. The order, Ifeanyi noted, did not go down well with the deceased.

“When her killers came, they demanded from my mother why she insisted on farming on that piece of land. My mother told them that the land belonged to her late husband with all the economic trees there. In the process, a fight ensued and they came together and wrestled my mum to the ground. One of them, now at large, used a machete to inflict very deep injuries on my mother’s head and body,” he told the reporter.

The reporter further gathered that five suspects were arrested by the police in connection to the incident. They have since been charged to court and remanded in prison while one other suspect is still at large.

Also speaking on their ordeal since the death of their mother, another of her children, Chukwudi, lamented that since the death of their mother, life had become very harsh, especially in the face of the hard economic realities.

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The remaining children of the deceased, Onuabuchi, Olisaemeka, Chika, Mmesomma, Chinonso and Akachukwu also called on the state government and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) to come to their aid and help facilitate the prosecution of those that killed their mother.

A police medical report on the injuries inflicted on the deceased, which was presented at FETHA on April 1, 2015, had a diagnosis of soft-tissue injuries resulting from assault.

The report stated: “She sustained multiple machete cuts, involving the right parietal (head) region, right ribs, both arms, both thighs, left legs and foot. She was treated by the medical officer, referred to orthopaedic and plastic surgeons for further management. She is still in an unstable condition.”

Another report by a consultant pathologist, Dr. Edegbe Felix, also disclosed that the deceased died as a result of multiple fractures in the head caused by deep machete cuts she sustained during the fight with the suspects.

The traditional ruler of Nkomoro community, Ezeogo David Nworie, confirmed the incident and said he was aware of unusual assaults on the deceased widow. He said he had waded into the matter on several occasions but denied that he was aware that the last impasse could lead to the death of the widow.

He maintained that he had always intervened in the matter while the husband was still alive. He declined further comments since the case was already in court.

The reporter gathered that the deceased lost her husband six years ago and has since been struggling to cater for their children before she met her untimely death after struggling to survive at the Federal Teaching Hospital, Abakaliki.

The Ebonyi State Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Mr. George Okafor, confirmed the arrest of five suspects in connection with the incident. He said efforts were on to arrest the fleeing suspect, adding that those arrested had been charged to court.

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