

Abia community in grief as police kill only son, two others

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Okey Sampson, Aba

In Igbo land, a male child is held in high esteem. It is so because he is largely seen as one who would take over the affairs of the family in the case of his father's demise. This is a generally held view and it has remained so among the people of the South East. It is common place in the area that a man may be regarded as having no child at all if he had all female children.

It was against this backdrop that Mr. Obiocha married for his son, Adimchi two years ago at the age of 15 so that even if he died early in life, the family lineage will not go into extinct. His prayers however, were that his only son would live long to raise children who would stay in his stead when he eventually dies.

Adimchi's early marriage which is alien in Igbo land (it is quite hard to see a boy getting married at 15 in the area), made him man enough to attend village meetings. So, he was attending such meeting in his community, Ntigha Okpuala in Isiala Ngwa North council area of Abia State late February when death knocked through three policemen from the state police command.

Adimchi, 17, was in a meeting with his kinsmen when three policemen, an inspector and two sergeants stormed the place in a Mercedes Benz 190 and started shooting indiscriminately. Following the shooting, the villagers and some of those at the meeting ran in different directions for safety thinking the men were Fulani herders. By the time the shooting died down and the policemen fled, three persons including Adimchi were stone dead. Others who died were Joseph Nwokocho and Obinna.

Left to mourn the teenage Adimchi are his parents and a pregnant widow.

Based on the alleged shabby way police in Abia handled the matter, a human rights lawyer based in Umuahia, Dr. Anthony Agbazuere together with the leaders of the community, petitioned the Inspector-General of Police Abubakar Idris (IGP).

"The traditional ruler and his council of chiefs came to me and alerted me to the incident which made me to petition IGP Abubakar Idriss and he has responded. The IGP in his response directed the Commissioner of Police, Anthony Ogbizi to investigate the matter, the three policemen have been arrested and are right now at the state Criminal Investigating Department (CID) Umuahia," he said.

The lawyer who claimed that information at his disposal pointed to the fact that there were people behind the scene making frantic efforts to ensure that the three suspects are released, has vowed to ensure such did not happen.

The people were yet to know the motive behind the killing, according to Abgazuere.

"What we don't know is if the killing was politically motivated or not but we want to make sure that the directive of the IGP is obeyed and for the suspects to be prosecuted before a competent court of jurisdiction. We also have information that they have taken their case to the Assistant Inspector of Police (AIG) zone 9 boasting that they will be released, but when I heard the boast I just sent the IGP's letter to the AIG and that was the end of that move."

Agbazuere explained that what he and the community wanted was for the three police suspects to be taken to court for murder and called on the state police command to investigate and prosecute them as they were not supposed to kill those they were supposed to protect.

One of the chiefs, Omerenma Ubani said they were in their community on the said day when they heard gunshots.

Ubani who stated how grieved the community is, said the initial thinking of the community was that herdsmen had invaded their place while some thought that kidnappers had arrived since one of their women was recently kidnapped.

He said when they came out, they saw three young men on the ground.

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"Our first reaction was to take them to the hospital in a bid to save their lives only for them to be confirmed dead," he said bitterly.

When contacted the state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) Geoffrey Ogbonna that he was not aware of the incident.