

# TENSION, FEAR AS KILLERS SPREAD BLOOD IN SOUTHEAST

■ Towns, communities invaded  
■ Governors, leaders confused

**From Magnus Eze, Geoffrey Anyanwu (Enugu), Chijioke Agwu (Abakaliki), George Onyejiuwa (Owerri), Okey Sampson (Umuahia) and Obinna Odogwu (Awka)**

**MANY** families are in grief in Ohaozara and Onicha Local Government Areas of Ebonyi State, following the bloody invasion of Isu and Onicha Igboeze communities by murderous gunmen on Thursday, October 7, 2021.

No fewer than 10 persons lost their lives in the bloody attack, including two policemen killed by the daredevils when they attacked Isu police station.

A young lawyer, Aja Ogbonnaya Aja, his client, Ogbonnaya Abani and another person, from the neighbouring Okposi community in Ohaozara LGA, who were heading for the High Court at Ohiozara were marched out of their vehicle and shot dead. Not even the pleas of the lawyer who just wedded in April this year with his wife said to be carrying about seven months pregnancy could save them, as the heartless criminals pumped hot bullets into their victims.

The gunmen were said to have burnt the Lexus sports utility vehicle they came with and left the area with the lawyer's vehicle.

There have been killings in Onicha Igboeze in the last three months by gunmen and security agents.

Last month, a 27-year-old woman and daughter of the traditional ruler of the community, Elizabeth Agwu, was hit by a bullet when policemen invaded the community to arrest a suspect. She died as a result of the bullet which got her on the abdomen.

Before this period, yet-to-be identified gunmen had on Monday, August 9, 2021, the first day of the sit-at-home order called by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) to press for the release of its leader, Nnamdi Kanu, killed at least eight persons at Anike Onicha in Onicha Igboeze.

The killings took place at about 6.00a.m on that black Monday: the victims were going about their normal businesses when they were accosted, attacked, killed and their vehicles, motorcycles and other valuable property burnt.

Two of the victims were natives of Anike Onicha, while one hailed from Ezza North Area of the state, but resident in Onicha

where he traded in household items. The rest were people from different parts of the country passing through Onicha. The incident had caused serious panic and fear within the community and its environs especially as the identity of the perpetrators were not ascertained.

However, police in the state accused the pro-Biafra group, IPOB, of masterminding the killing while enforcing its sit-at-home order in the area.

A family member of Eze Nwangwu, who was among the people killed in the attack told our correspondent on phone that investigation conducted by the community indicated that the attack was properly planned.

The family source who pleaded anonymity said: "That day at about 6.00a.m our brother was attacked and killed alongside seven other persons. The incident happened within 30 minutes. The criminals camped inside the bush along the road. One of the survivors who narrated the story told us that they had blocked the road and were taking people into the bush where they killed them. They wore masks and dressed in black overall. At the end, two youths were killed in Anike."

Asked if the victims had been buried, he said no, adding that the delay was occasioned by the inability of the police to release their bodies.

"They have not been buried because the police refused to release the bodies to us. But I can confirm to you now that all that have been resolved and they will be buried on 26 and 27 of October," he said.

While the bereaved families mourn their beloved ones whose lives were cut short by some bloodthirsty goons, the Police in Ebonyi State said they were on the trail of the assailants.

Consultant to Ebonyi State Government on Internal Security who is also in charge of the South East Security Network, Ebubeagu, in the state, Chief Stanley Okroemegha, told Sunday Sun that the outfit has been working in harmony with other security agencies to arrest the situation.

He said that "the efforts of the police and Ebubeagu have paid off as some of the perpetrators of that killing have been arrested. Our men are always patrolling all parts of the state to ensure that people are not harassed or attacked by unknown persons. And

I can assure you that we will continue to do our best to ensure the security of lives and property in the state."

The foregoing scenario clearly showed that the security situation in the Southeast has almost deteriorated. Policemen and other security agents are randomly attacked and killed at checkpoints and in their stations. Civilians are equally attacked and killed by rampaging gunmen.

In fact, no state can be said to be free from the growing bloodbath in the region and security agencies are apparently not on top of the situation. As gunmen continue to spread sorrow in the Southeast, the people of the region are living in fear and uncertainty.

## Anambra: A new killing field

Since this year, more than 20 people including policemen, naval officers, a staff of the Nigeria Correctional Service (NCS) and civilians have been killed by gunmen in parts of Anambra State.

Also, property worth several millions including police stations, patrol vehicles, and others have been destroyed by the attackers even as guns and other security gadgets belonging to the security operatives were taken away.

The first attack by gunmen in Anambra this year was on February 24, when four policemen said to be on duty in Mkpologwu and Omogho communities in Aguata and Orumba North Local Government Areas respectively were dastardly killed and their patrol vehicles set ablaze. The attackers also reportedly made away with their victims' guns.

But while the matter was still raging, gunmen struck again on March 18, killing three policemen on duty at a location in Neni community, Anaocha LGA of the state and carted away their rifles. They also set their patrol vehicles ablaze.

On the same day, three naval personnel on duty at Awkuzu, Oyi LGA were attacked and killed. Their guns and other military equipment were equally taken away by their killers.

On March 19, gunmen attacked a vehicle belonging to the Nigeria Correctional Service on court duty, killing one staffer and a policewoman who joined the vehicle from the court in Ekwulobia.

These killings and burning of police stations continued until about three months ago when there was what looked like a



• Late Ogbonnaya Aja with wife during their wedding in April.

break. Within the short period of the break, the residents of Anambra with the exception of Awka which witnessed a few more cult related killings, had some reprieve.

However, there was a resurgence last month, in what could be termed the return of gunmen in Anambra. This time around, security operatives were not just targeted, eminent persons and politicians were not spared.

Dr. Chike Akunyili, the husband of the erstwhile Director-General of the National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), the late Prof. Dora Akunyili and his colleague, Dr. Lawrence Ezenwa, were among high profile murders in two separate attacks by gunmen lately. Also, the convoy of House of Representatives member, Chris Azubuogu, was attacked and his driver killed, within the same period. A police station was attacked in Ajali, also in the state, among others.

One of the latest victims whose death deeply pained Anambra people and Nigerians generally was Dr Akunyili.

The medical doctor was said to be returning from an event in Onitsha axis where he had received a posthumous award on behalf of his late wife before the gunmen killed him around Nkpor.

Before the killing of Akunyili and Ezenwa, the traditional ruler of Mkpunando community in Aguleri, Anambra East LGA,

Igwe Alex Edozieuno, was assassinated alongside his driver whose name was simply given as Chukwuemeka.

They were killed on September 10, 2021 after Ezu River Bridge along Onitsha-Otuocha-Adani Road while returning from a visit.

Even, his son, Prince Chinedu Edozieuno, has, since, raised the alarm over threat to his own life. Chinedu told newsmen that those who killed his father were trailing him. He said that he had received a number of threat messages from the suspect who had asked him to stop searching for who killed his father.

The All Progressives Congress (APC) in the state has since tagged the former monarch's death a politically motivated one.

Director General of Andy Uba Campaign Council, Paul Chukwuma, and the state chairman of the party, Chief Basil Ejidike, at a press conference in Awka, said that the deposed monarch was killed not long after he publicly joined the APC.

The attacks by gunmen in the state last Sunday also consumed the Nnewi residential home of Chief Joe Igboke, a chieftain of the APC and aide to the Lagos State governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu.

On the same day, the attackers equally set the Nnewi office of the Directorate of State Service (DSS) ablaze. Igboke said no life was lost, but that his property was burnt down.