

Rage over Ebubeagu

From Stanley Uzoaru, Owerri

■ IPOB flays alleged murder of widow's only son in Imo, other atrocities by security outfit

NATIVES of Okwu, Umuoke in Atta, Njaba Local Government Area of Imo State are still in pain over the killing of their son, Chigozie Igbo, by men suspected to be members of the South East Security Network, otherwise called *Ebubeagu*, on January 28, 2022.

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), vowed to avenge the death of the young man and other such killings allegedly perpetrated by *Ebubeagu* and their collaborators.

Chigo, as he was fondly called, had his forehead ripped off by bullets from the security men allegedly brought in by the state government to flush out members of IPOB in specific areas in the state. But police said they were not aware of any such killing including the alleged burning down of houses by the security outfit in the community.

An eye witness, Pastor Christopher Okewuihe of the Defenders of Faith Bible Church, narrated how, Chigo, the 22-year-old artisan who specialised in basket weaving was murdered: "I came for a burial from Ore in Ondo State and stopped at my community. I trekked a little to Ama Odu where a food vendor was selling to buy some items when I noticed two Hilux vehicles with heavily armed men inside.

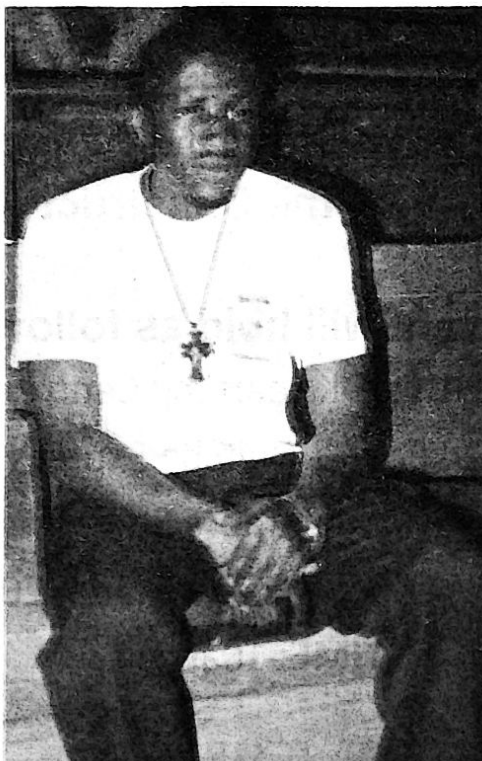
"I was not used to happenings in the area. Four boys were

sitting on a seat close to the woman. One of them on noticing the vehicle of the security men coming hurriedly moved away while the remaining three including Chigo ran on sighting the vehicle.

"I was still standing there wondering what was going on when one of the security men opened fire on the boys. The bullet hit Chigo and he died instantly while they continued chasing the other two."

Strangely, the whereabouts of the two youths, Okechukwu Ejiofor and Chisom Okoro, who were being pursued by the *Ebubeagu* men were yet unknown. But their parents and members of the community believe that they might have either been harmed or incarcerated by the security outfit.

Emeka Okoro, father of one of the boys lamented told *Daily Sun*: "We don't know where to search for them again. We have searched everywhere in this village but all to no avail. We are afraid some-



Chigozie, murdered in his prime

thing might have happened to them."

Some indigenes of the area gave their own accounts of the incident. Paul Ogu said: "When they came, people started running to different directions. Some ran into the bush. We didn't know if they came for any particular person, but nobody stayed back to know their mission. It was only when they left that we discovered that Chigo was killed by their sporadic gunshots."

Chigo's mother, Mercelina, could not hold back tears: "Chigo is my only son and only child. His father died long ago leaving me to take care of him. That I have been doing since he was a child until they snatched him from me.

"I don't think I can live without my only child. He meant the whole world to me. He was even the one fending for me you can see that I am old. I can barely cater for myself. Now, they have removed my legs and

my arms from my body."

She described her son as a good boy who was never involved in any social vices such as smoking like many young people of his age.

The killing of Chigo and disappearance of the other two young men have continued to cause anxiety and fear in the community. Some of the respondents emphatically condemned the crude methods and tactics of the *Ebubeagu* security outfit.

A community leader who would not want to be named said: "They don't listen to anybody, they just come anytime they like searching for members of IPOB. They look very mean in their black attire. Some of them wear dreadlock hairstyle and even put on earrings. Their presence reminds people of the defunct SARS.

"We are not stopping them from doing their work. But they should not kill us while doing it. Look at Chigo now, the only child of his mother killed just like that. We demand justice. We want all those behind his death and the disappearance of our children, the day Chigo was killed to be presented to us. At least, let us know if they are alive or dead."

At the moment, the battle line has been drawn between IPOB and the *Ebubeagu* security network. IPOB's Media and Publicity Secretary, Emma Powerful, described the death of Chigo and others around the area as callous.

The group condemned

the invasion by *Ebubeagu*, which it also accused of burning down houses in the guise of searching for members of the Eastern Security Network (ESN): "IPOB will not allow this barbarity and cruelty to continue.

"We will avenge these unprovoked and needless attacks against houses of innocent citizens. The mindless burning down of houses in our region by Nigeria security and *Ebubeagu* cannot go unreciprocated.

"We warned against the formation of *Ebubeagu* in our land. We knew they were coming to collude with the security agencies in killing our people. People ignored our warning, and today we have been vindicated.

"Our fears have come true but the wicked will not go free. For doing this to our people, we declare that the days of *Ebubeagu* in our land are numbered. They will pay for what the military is using them to do against their people.

"We are crying so that the whole world will hear us, the Amnesty International, United Nations and the rest of the international community to see what is going on in Imo State. Youths are being killed and the whole village turned to a desert. People are made to run away from their homes because of fear of being killed by the *Ebubeagu* security. But time will catch up with them."



Chigozie's mother