

Protest rocks Abia community over kidnappings, killings by gunmen

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From **Okey Sampson**, Umuahia

Youths of Uturu community in Isuikwuato Local Government Area of Abia, yesterday, protested over the increasing rate of kidnappings and killings along Okigwe/Uturu/Isuikwuato road.

The protest was coming on the heels of a recent incident in which two people were killed, less than one week after seven people were kidnapped along the same road.

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Meanwhile, the Abia State Government has reacted over the incidents, describing them as the criminal activities of mindless terrorists.

The protest, which was held along Uturu road, close to Marist Secondary School, saw the protesters blocking the road and demanding that Imo state and Abia state governments take action, immediately, to curb the killings and kidnappings of Uturu natives.

Some of the protesters who spoke to newsmen said kidnappings and killings of Uturu indigenes were on the rise, and that it was affecting the economy of the people at home.

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They said they may continue the protest if nothing was not immediately done to stop the criminal activities by gunmen.

The protesting youths said the road has become a safe haven for kidnappers and a source of fear for travellers, notwithstanding there were more than six security checkpoints along the road.

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A traditional ruler from the area, who did not want his name on print, confirmed the protest.

He said the youths were protesting the incessant killings and kidnappings of their people by gunmen he believed were Fulani herders.

Meanwhile, the Abia State Government has reacted to the recent kidnappings and killings in the area.

In a release, Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Eze Chikamnayo, said: “Abia State government has been informed of yet another incident of senseless kidnapping and unfortunate death of innocent citizens, especially students around the ABSU – Uturu- Okigwe axis and Umunneochi – Ihube area occasioned by the criminal activities of mindless terrorists.

“We, as a government, are saddened by this ugly development around our boundaries with Imo state, and are leaving no stone unturned to ensure that normalcy is quickly restored.

“However, we may not, for operational reasons, be able to go into further details at this time, so as to safeguard the processes already put in place by our security agencies and government authorities”.

The release said Governor Okezie Ikpeazu assured all citizens of the state of his total commitment to safeguard their lives and property, while urging all to remain calm and maintain the peace.