

Awomama killing: Victims're bandits –Uzodimma

•Says govt won't be deterred by propaganda

20th July 2022 in National

0



0
SHARES

107
VIEWS

Share on Facebook

Share on Twitter

From **Stanley Uzoaru**, Owerri

Youths of Amiri, Otulu, Awomama communities in Oru west and Oru east councils of Imo state, yesterday, continued their protest over Sunday's killing of nine youths from the community by operatives of the state government's security outfit, Ebubeagu, while returning from a wedding ceremony at the neighbouring Oru West Local Government Area of Imo State.

The irate youths, who barricaded the busy Owerri – Onitsha expressway, called for the scrapping of Ebubeagu. One of the protesters, Chimezie Amafor, said that they were carrying out the peaceful protest because of the extra-judicial killings by the state government-sponsored security outfit.

"Whenever the Ebubeagu people come to where an event is going on, they start shooting sporadically and killing people in the process, and would later claim that they are criminals. This is what has been going on in this area everyday; we can't even sleep in our homes because of Ebubeagu people.

"We can't continue to live like this. If they are looking for criminals, they should go after them and not just kill people, especially the youths, for the fun of it," he lamented.

Also, Chidozie Ekesinachi, who lost two of his siblings: Ifechi, 18-year-old, and Chukwuemeka, 20 years, said that he, too, was arrested, beaten and detained by members of the Ebubeagu, for crying over the dead body of his younger brother when he got where he was killed and abandoned on the road.

He said that it was when the youths started protesting, on Monday, that he was released from Ebubeagu cell in Omuma, council headquarters of Oru-East council area.

"We want justice for the killing of my younger brothers for no offence," he said.

Regardless, contrary to media reports that the nine youths killed were returning from a wedding ceremony Governor Hope Uzodimma said the victims were bandits neutralised after an operation by the Department of State Service (DSS).

The governor, who made the disclosure in a statement by his Chief Press Secretary/Media Adviser, Oguwuike Nwachukwu, described the reports as a propaganda, adding that the state government won't be deterred by it, in its bid to curb the insecurity challenge in the State.

The release reads in part: "Governor Hope Uzodimma of Imo State has said that the government will not be deterred by propaganda and blackmail in her quest to protect the lives and property of Imo citizens.

"Governor Uzodimma said that the government had been briefed on the incident by the Director of State Services, in an interim report made available to members of the Security Council.

"The governor added that the DSS Director confirmed that his men carried out an operation in a Camp at Awomanma with the assistance of their informant and not at a wedding place as claimed by the youths and that it was in the process that some bandits were neutralised."

The governor said while the Security Council awaits a detailed report on the incident, residents of the State should be wary of blackmail and propaganda against security agencies.

Governor Uzodimma also used the opportunity to describe as fallacy, the claim on the social media and section of the media that a 15-year-old girl was allegedly impregnated in the DSS detention.

He said: "Security report indicated that two ladies who were caught with bandits about six months ago have been helping the DSS in identifying and arresting other dangerous bandits in the State. Incidentally, the so-called 15-year-old lady happens to be the girl friend to a key gang leader of the bandits terrorising the State, but on the trail by DSS operatives."

The governor stressed that the security report showed that the fleeing gang leader had reached out to his sponsors who had resorted to using the 15-year-old lady in question to blackmail the DSS and divert attention.

"The whole thing boils down to propaganda and blackmail targeted at the security agencies. You know I will never allow anything ungodly to happen in Imo state. Their target is to puncture the relative peace the security agencies have helped us to achieve in Imo state and we are determined to sustain the peace. We won't be deterred and no amount of propaganda and blackmail will deter the security agencies from doing their work."

Meanwhile, the DSS in Owerri, Imo state capital, has paraded a member of the Eastern Security Network (ESN) of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Chinonso Mmerem, who led them to one of their camps at Awomanma, where some leaders of the group were killed.

While answering questions from newsmen, Mmerem confessed that the victims of Sunday's incident were members of the ESN killed at their camp.

"I am Chinonso Mmerem. I led the DSS to the ESN camp at Awomanma. I was caught a week ago by the security agents. On Sunday, I led them to the camp, where they were having meetings against Monday's sit-at-home. Some of the members were shot, including "One man squad" who is our leader at Awomanma. Although he did not die, he escaped with bullet wounds, but his phone was retrieved by the DSS.

Meanwhile, DSS has insisted that the victims killed on Sunday were members of ESN and not guests from a wedding ceremony as against earlier reports.