

# AWOMAMA MASSACRE: HOW MY GUESTS WERE KILLED -BRIDEGROOM

...Accuses Ebubeagu, says 'they took away cars, motorcycles from my in-law's compound'

## Other survivors speak

From **George Onyejuwa**, Owerri

**THE** Ubahaji Otulu community in Oru West Local Government Area of Imo State was thrown into mourning last Sunday, July 17 when 14 of their young men were massacred by operatives whose identity has become a subject of controversy.

While the Otulu youths believe that it was Ebubeagu, the Imo State government security outfit, that killed their brothers who they claimed were returning to their community from Awomama after the traditional wedding of one of their kinsmen, Chijioke Nnanna, the government said that it was the operatives of the Department of State Services (DSS) that killed some bandits in their camp.

But the killing of the youths has caused great bedlam across the state, leading to a two-day mass protest by all the communities in Oru West who barricaded the ever-busy Owerri/Onitsha road with the corpses of the deceased as they called for the scrapping of the Ebubeagu and the immediate arrest of Mr Izuchukwu Akuegbulanwa (Ogwu Mozambique), who they accused of masterminding the attack and killing.

They also accused Governor Hope Uzodinma of using the Ebubeagu, which they described as his militia, to intimidate the people of the state, especially in Oru zone in the guise of fighting insecurity.

Indeed, the DSS had claimed that seven of the young men who they branded as members of the Eastern Security Network (ESN), the militant wing of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), were killed during a duel in a sting operation in one of the camps of the IPOB/ESN in Awomama, where they were allegedly planning how to enforce a Monday sit-at-home in the area.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, the DSS, Imo State Command said: "Following the arrest of one Chiononso Mmerem (Network), a member of the IPOB militant wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), a sting operation was conducted by a joint security team on 17 July, 2022 to arrest members of the criminal gang terrorizing Awo - Omama and other parts of the state.

"In course of the operation, elements opened fire on the security forces which consequently repelled with a superior power leading to the neutralization of about seven members of the criminal gang in the hideout used as their camp. At this juncture, it is pertinent to inform that the elements gathered to plan their nefarious operations and not attending a traditional marriage as being speculated by members of the outlawed group."

But one of the survivors of the killing, Nnamdi Kingsley Nnanna, elder brother of Chijioke Nnanna, accused the security agents of trying to cover up their heinous crime by branding them members of the IPOB/ESN.

He said that the killed 14 youths



were returning to their Otulu community from Awo - Urubuochoi, when the operatives of Ebubeagu opened fire on them.

The distraught Nnamdi disclosed that he had escaped death by the whiskers after having pleaded with the commander of the Ebubeagu popularly known as Ogwu Mozambique who he had recognised that Sunday night.

He added that one of the commanders who had intervened on his behalf having heard what he said had warned the others that nobody should shoot him, saying that he was an innocent person after they had already killed the two persons with him on the motorcycle.

Nnamdi who spoke to this reporter amidst sobs disclosed that after his younger brother's traditional wedding at Urubuochoi Awo, Awomama community, Oru East council, three motorcycles conveying his other kinsmen back to Otulu had taken off while himself and another of his kinsman boarded the fourth motorcycle.

He claimed that just about three poles after they left their in-law's place that Ebubeagu people suddenly emerged on the road and opened fire and killed his brothers like fowls, adding that they had to reverse immediately as he told the motorcyclist to take them back to their in-law's house.

Nnamdi said that even as they were scampering for safety that the Ebubeagu members who were chasing them with their Hilux were at the same time shooting at them.

"We didn't know that they had blocked the road with a truck, the

motorcyclist who was on top speed hit a convert and the person sitting at my back, he is from Agwa in Oguta and lives in Otulu; he went with us to the wedding, fell off the motorcycle. The Ebubeagu people who caught up with him while still on the ground shot him dead immediately. My brother, Chikereuba Anyadioha, who was carrying us with the bike was shot on his hand and as a result we both fell off the motorcycle.

"The Ebubeagu people also shot him dead. But I was shouting on top of my voice that I am from Otulu and not Awo, that we only came for the traditional wedding of my brother. About eight men came

out from the Hilux that has been chasing us, they all cocked their rifles. One of them hit my head with his rifle and I fell flat on the ground. When I raised up my face I recognised Ogwu Mozambique who is the team leader of the Ebubeagu from Amiri. I called him 'Ogwu na'Amiri' that I am your in-law because one of his sisters is married in my community. I told him that he knew I'm a borehole driller and was among those who had drilled the borehole in his compound. It was then one of them said don't shot him and repeated that anybody who shot this boy this night will have problem with him," Nnamdi said.

He claimed that he was later bound hand and foot, blind-folded with his cloth, thrown into their truck at about 12:30a.m and taken to their camp at Omama, the council headquarters of Oru - East.

"It was at their camp that I saw one of my brothers, Diri Uchenna who had taught me the borehole drilling work and he was surprised that I was alive. He told me that all our brothers who attended the wedding were all dead. He said that they were arrested by Ebubeagu for trying to carry the dead bodies of their brothers killed that night.

"While at their camp, we were still pleading with Ogwu Mozambique that we are his in-laws that we only came to Awo for the traditional wedding of our younger brother, Chijioke Nnanna. Ogwu Mozambique now ordered that we should be put in the cell. About 5-6 a.m on Monday they brought me out and one of the Ebubeagu commanders

asked me where the wedding took place in Awo and I volunteered to take them there if they wanted. They also asked me the name of my community, I told them Otulu and I also told them that our Eze is Ifeanyichukwu

Orji, Duruicheoma V. They also asked me if he was around and I said I don't know because I had just returned from an outside work where I had gone to drill a borehole on Saturday. They said I should take them first to our in-laws place in Awo. They put me in their Hilux, with a back up of four Hilux vans and we drove to our in-law's compound.

"Hundreds of our youths were already there protesting and the bodies of seven of our brothers that were killed have been carried to the place. It was there that our youths knew that I was still alive as they have been searching for my corpse. But because of the army people who were already there trying to maintain peace, the Ebubeagu people immediately drove out and we headed for my community Otulu. When we got to our Eze's palace, two of the Ebubeagu members went down to knock at his gate severally and, when nobody came out they drove me back to their camp at Omama. Again that same man with Ebubeagu who said that nobody should shot this boy last night Sunday repeated it again that this boy is innocent and that nobody should touch me," he narrated.

Nnamdi disclosed that he was again detained at their cell with two of his kinsmen.

"My major worry was because of my mother, we are only three, my elder brother died at 34 years and now I am being held by Ebubeagu not knowing what will happen next. I can't reach her to tell her that I am still alive because they seized all my phones.

"About an hour later, that same person who said they should not shoot me came to our cell and asked all those who went to the wedding to come out and we did. Surprisingly, they gave us back our phones. The only thing I saw was my charger and bluetooth. One of the commanders asked how much was collected from me, I said N9,500. Nnaemeka from Awo who also attended the wedding, the Ebubeagu members took his N10,500, gold necklace, finger ring and wristwatch. They only transferred N 20,000 to us. And we were asked to go, I think it was because of the protest by the communities in both Oru West and East, as they also realized that the people they killed were innocent people," Nnamdi said.

Chijioke Nnanna, the younger brother of Nnamdi Kingsley Nnanna who also spoke to this reporter said that his kinsmen had accompanied him to Awomama on Sunday being July 17, for his traditional wedding. He said that his kinsmen who were returning to their community, Otulu, were attacked and killed by the members of Ebubeagu who tagged them members of ESN.

He also revealed that one of his brothers who was shot on his foot and had managed to crawl back to

his in-law's compound was traced through his blood to the compound and shot dead.

Chijioke claimed that the members of the Ebubeagu also destroyed everything used for the wedding, including canopies, plastic chairs in his in-law's compound, adding that they also took away the car of his brother in-law who had returned from Abuja for the wedding, as well as that of his friend who came from Onitsha.

"A day that was supposed to be one of the happiest day of my life was turned into sorrowful day as members of Ebubeagu killed 14 persons, seven of who are my brothers who had accompanied me to Awomama for my traditional wedding.

"My brothers had just finished eating and drinking and said they have to go back to the village because it was about 7:30p.m. But not quite about 15 minutes when they left that we began to hear the sounds of continuous shooting and everybody was wondering what was happening. Even people in the compound started running to find where to hide. Later one of our brothers who earlier left with the others managed to return back to my in-law's house because he was shot, but the Ebubeagu members had traced him because of blood dripping from his body and went to where he was hiding behind the GeePee tank and shot him dead.

"We couldn't help him because of the continuous shooting because everybody was afraid to come out. The Ebubeagu members destroyed everything in the compound, including the things used in the traditional wedding," he said.

He disclosed that it was later in the morning when the army intervened that they were able to come out and realised that the Ebubeagu people had killed 14 people, seven of whom are their brothers and kinsmen who attended his traditional wedding.

Similarly, Chidozie Ekesinachi whose two siblings Chukwuemeka, 20, and Ifechi, 18, were shot dead alongside others said on that fateful Sunday night, he was arrested and severely beaten by the Ebubeagu as he went in search of his siblings when heard of what happened.

"I was supposed to be at the traditional wedding, but I couldn't meet up because I went for an outside job. It was later in the evening about 8:00p.m when one of our brothers ran to our house to inform us that all our brothers who attended the Chijioke Nnanna's traditional wedding had been killed by Ebubeagu people.

"We decided to go to Awo in search of my two siblings, Chukwuemeka and Ifechi, but around Afor-Awo we saw somebody lying on the road and when we looked closer it was my brother, Chukwuemeka who is an Aluminum fabricator and I fell on him crying.

"Immediately, the Ebubeagu people who were hiding something arrived with their Hilux van and their men started beating us that we have come to carry our members. While still crying I told them that he is my junior brother who went to our brother's wedding in Awo that Sunday," he said.

He said that instead the Ebubeagu people tied them up and threw them into a truck they came with and took them to Omama, their office and

Continued on  
www.sunnewsonline.com