

The Lifeline

Again, blood flows in Ebonyi as man kills friend

•After eating my food, he killed my son –Grieving mother

From **Wilson Okereke**, Afikpo

AMUTU, one of the component villages of Onicha Igboeze autonomous community in Onicha Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, is experiencing pandemonium following the killing of 27-year-old Oyibo Nwani Okoronkwo on Saturday, March 18. He was allegedly killed by his friend and former classmate, Emmanuel.

Speaking from his hospital bed, one of the survivors of the alleged attack and a party agent during the gubernatorial election at Amutu Town Hall, Mr. Sunday Okorie, said, besides the mild problem, which was noticed in the BVAS machines at the early stage of the exercise, there was absolute peace in the area, until 3:30pm when the council chairman boss, Hon. Chidiebere Uzor, stormed the place with his large number of security men and armed bodyguards.

According to the victim, immediately Uzor discovered that the voting was in favour of the opposition party, he became annoyed and ordered his armed thugs to take the ballot boxes into his vehicles but the youths of the area, in their determination to protect their votes, decided to resist the thugs without knowing that the suspected killers were determined to cause mayhem at the polling unit. In the process, Mr. Oyibo Nwani was allegedly gunned down by Emmanuel.

"As soon as the local government chairman noticed that the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was leading against his party, the All Progressive Congress (APC) with a big margin, he became infuriated and ordered that the boxes containing the ballot papers should be taken into his vehicles but having heard such instruction, Mr. Oyibo, who was the agent of Action Alliance, a few others and myself hurriedly took the boxes inside the hall for protection. But Uzor forced his way into the structure by breaking the door with his foot and commanded that we should be beaten to stupor.

"Immediately, the people started to pounce on us as they were commanded and in the process one of the thugs who perhaps wanted to slit my throat with a sharp dagger missed his target and stabbed me in the upper part of my eye and other parts of my head," he said.

Okorie also disclosed that, after himself and Oyibo had extricated themselves from the grip of the thugs and policemen by maneuvering their way out of the hall and wanted to run for their lives, suddenly Emmanuel, who was the foot soldier of the council boss and APC agent at the unit, collected a gun from one of the thugs and shot the deceased right on his face. And the man died on the spot.

He added that, in spite of the havoc allegedly caused by Uzor and his cohorts, they did



•Protesters



•Bereaved mother

not show remorse as they went ahead and carried the targeted boxes into their standby vehicles and zoomed off.

While recalling the background of the incident, Okorie, who is the secretary of Amutu Development Union, said that the "trouble in the area started in November 2022 when some APC faithful and loyalists of Uzor allegedly began to buy some people's permanent voter cards and the leadership of the village, headed by Mr. Ngene Okorie, having got the wind of the illegal transaction, called for an exco meeting.

"He condemned the alleged act and appealed to the entire villagers never to comply with such business any longer.

"Based on the action of the union, Uzor, who was not happy over the people's decision, allegedly rushed to Ebonyi State Broadcasting Corporation on November 20, 2022, and announced on the radio that the executive members of the area had been dissolved without any justification. Along the line, he (the same council chairman)



Okorie in hospital

instituted a seven-man caretaker committee, comprising Mr. Ogonnaya Obasi Nwankwo as the head and other persons who could easily be influenced negatively at all times.

"That was how our problem started as the leadership was hijacked by the puppets who easily succumb to whatever instruction given by Uzor. Since then, the imposed leaders with their claimed connections have been intimidating and threatening the lives of other stakeholders, until that sorrowful day that they eventually executed their evil plan against the village by killing Oyibo Nwani in cold blood," he explained.

Another witness simply identified as Mr. Chimaobi alleged that both the brutalization of the survivor and the killing of Oyibo took place in the presence of Uzor, the former commander of the defunct Ebubeagu Security Network, Ebonyi State Command, Mr. Friday Nnanna Ujor, the chairman of Amanato Ezeukwa Development Union, Mr. Anoke Akpuru, and others. He added that till the time of this report none of them

had expressed condolence to the bereaved villagers.

The grieving mother of victim, Mrs. Justina Abel, told Daily Sun that the alleged killer and her late son were former classmates and friends. According to her, before the incident, a day would hardly pass without two of them staying together, and she expressed surprise at how he could allow himself to be used in such manner.

"Two days to the incident, my son and the same person who has sent him to the world beyond ate together in my house without knowing that the same man was nursing evil in his mind," she said.

We learnt that all the members of the said caretaker committee, comprising their chairman, Mr. Obasi, the accused killer, Ogo, Monday Uzor Nwankwor, Samuel Eze Reuben, Uchenna Nwani Nwinyinya, Samuel Ndidi Aaron and Benson Okorie Nweze have been on the run after the ugly incident.

When contacted on phone, Uzor said that he did not know what happened at the particular polling unit and expressed surprise as some persons began to link his name with the killing of Oyibo Nwani.

"Though I am not surprised because I am the council chairman and father of everyone in the area and, by the virtue of my office, I cannot handle gun and people are prone to say anything about me but, in a nutshell, I don't know anything about that incident. I don't even have my personal gun let alone ordering for the killing of my own subject.

"I don't know the deceased person and I did not order for the killing of anyone. Rather, based on my position, it is my duty to protect lives and properties of my subjects and that is exactly what I'm doing and who