

Tension in Anambra community as anti-tout squad opens fire, kills 3, injures 20 others

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From **Aloysius Attah**, Onitsha

There is palpable tension in Okpoko community, a thickly populated suburb of Onitsha, Anambra State, following the killing of three residents and 20 others who were allegedly injured by men of the Anti-Touting Squad set up recently by the Governor Chukwuma Soludo administration.

Sunday Sun gathered that problem started, when a private firm engaged for sanitation activities in the area engaged the services of the Soludo squad and the security arm of the town union in the area for the forceful collection of sanitation fees from the residents.

Speaking on the incident, the Chairman of All Street Chairmen and Secretaries in Okpoko community, Marcel Nnaeto, said the armed squad with their leaders invaded the community in the wee hours of Friday and bundled six street leaders of the community into their vehicles after beating them and blindfolding them before taking them to their office in Upper Iweka where they branded them as criminals terrorising Onitsha.

Nnaeto listed the persons taken away by the invaders to include Raphael Agu, Patrick Utobo, Onyeka Omeh, Obumneme Ohiagu and Dr Solomon Ibezim.

He said that the entire concerned residents of the community embarked on peaceful demonstration yesterday morning, demanding the release of their leaders and marched to the Okpoko Police Division when the squad turned again on them with various weapons and opened fire on the defenceless protesters and killed three of them on the spot while injuring over 20 others.

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He identified those murdered in cold blood as Nzube Akuma, Chimezie Uduji and a popular tricycle rider known as Nwa Togo.

While calling on Governor Soludo to ensure that justice is done, the residents demanded that the governor order for the immediate withdrawal of the services of the sanitation company, the arrest and prosecution of those involved in the killing, including the chairman of the local security in Okpoko identified as Stephen.

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer, Anambra State Command, Ikenga Tochi, said that he was away in Abuja for an official function and has not been briefed on the incident.

The Commander Anti-Touting Squad, Solomon Chukwuebuka, also declined comments when contacted.