

The Lifeline

Killing spree in Ebonyi

■ Gunmen spill blood, residents groan, demand police, military presence



•Ugochukwu



•Victim



•Nwaeze

From **Uchenna Inya, Abakaliki**

THE situation in Akpoha, a tiny hilly-stony community in Ahikpo Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, and Isu community in Onicha LGA of the state is that of blood, sorrow and anger. The situation was caused by gunmen who killed some members of the communities recently.

The two communities in the southern part of the state have been under attack by gunmen for some years now, with some of their people killed or kidnapped. The whereabouts of a traditional ruler, Eze Ambrose Ogbu of Isu community, abducted about two years ago are yet unknown.

The gunmen revived their dastardly acts in the area late last month and early this month by killing five members of the communities, including a vigilance group member, youth leader, ward councillor and two others.

In Akpoha, Emmanuel Nwocha, leader of the Neighbourhood Security Watch in the area, which replaced the defunct Ebubeagu Security Network formed by the last administration in the state for internal security, and another member of the community, Egwu Nicholas Nwocha, were shot dead. Inya Blessing Orioma from Ozizza, one of the communities in Afikpo, who visited the area, was also killed.

Emmanuel, who was the chief security officer of the company handling construction of a new bridge on the ever-busy Abakaliki/Akpoha highway by the federal government, had over 10 bullets pumped into his body.

A community leader in the area, Chief Dominic Ezekpu, described the incident as disheartening. He told Daily Sun that the community has lost seven persons

within the space of three years and called for heavy military presence in the area.

"I am urging the commander of Nkwagu military cantonment in the state to send us military men who will be staying on the Abakaliki/Akpoha highway. This is because we have lost souls that would have contributed to the socio-economic development of this community.

"The killings have affected our community seriously. During night period, immediately it is 7pm, you will not see any member of the community outside, everyone will be in the house and this is very dangerous because it is affecting the socio-economic development of this community," he lamented.

Youth president of the community, Uche Donatus, said the incident was very shocking, even as he recalled that

some members of the community were killed some years back by gunmen. He also bemoaned the killings, saying they had adversely affected the community.

Uche called for the establishment of military/police posts in the area to end the killings. The youth leader also called for the resolution of the land dispute between the community and its closest neighbour, Ezeke, in Amasiri, which has claimed lives.

He would want the communities to co-exist peacefully like before to enable Akpoha people easily detect any security issue in the community. He opined that if the land dispute between the two communities was not resolved, any security problem in Akpoha might be attributed to the dispute even when the issues may not be connected.

Expressing their frustration, Uche said: "It has really affected the community, especially the youths. We have been victims of these killings.

"Though the previous ones have been as a result of dispute over farmlands with the people of Ezeke, Amasiri. After that, this other young man was killed in the village during a wake and that is like Ogbu. He was murdered and that was during the burial of Eric. Eric was also killed in cold blood and all these are people from my community, people that would have assisted in the socio-economic development of the society.

"This time around, three persons were also murdered and left a pool of blood. We need a security post in-between the two communities. A lot of our youths are being attacked and murdered along the road.

"If there was a checkpoint, there would have been an interface between the assailants and security agencies because the kind of armoury they had, the kind

of guns they had is not what any local vigilance group can withstand.

"The commissioner of police should come to our rescue so that all these killings will stop and we pray for thorough investigation to find out the root cause of these killings so that they will stop, so that if you are in Akpoha you can sleep well.

"It's purely external from what we have seen. Government should come to our aid and resolve the land dispute we have with Ezeke people so that whenever anything happens, there will be no mindset, thinking towards that direction. We are brothers, the other sister community, we are relatives."

Coordinator of Amaoha Development Centre in the area, Kenneth Orji Obasi, said the attack has instilled fear and anxiety in residents of Akpoha and Afikpo. He noted that it was a tragic event that highlights the ongoing security challenges in the community.

"On the night of May 25, 2024, at approximately 11pm, an attack by unidentified gunmen took place in Akpoha, a community in Ebonyi State. The assailants opened fire, resulting in the tragic loss of three lives: Egwu Nicholas Nwocha, Emmanuel Nwocha, and Blessing Orioma Inya. This incident has deeply shocked the local community, raising concerns about security and safety in the locality.

"The victims of this heinous attack were community members, except Blessing who hails from Ozizza community in the same Afikpo, engaged in their night activities, when the attack occurred. Their deaths have left their families and the community in profound grief.

"According to witnesses, the gunmen arrived the community on two motor-



•CP Ogbodo

"The truth is that killing innocent people is always wrong - and no argument or excuse, no matter how deeply believed, can ever make it right. No religion on earth condones the killing of innocent people; no faith tradition tolerates the random killing of our brothers and sisters on this earth." - **Feisal Abdul Rauf**

cycles under the cover of darkness and began shooting indiscriminately. The attack seemed unprovoked, and the motive behind it remains unclear. The gunmen swiftly fled the scene before the arrival of local security forces.

"However, the attack has instilled fear and anxiety among the residents of Akpoha, Afikpo. In tandem with the Ebonyi State government's zero tolerance for criminalities, I condemn the attack and express my deepest condolences to the families of the deceased. I will intensify efforts in collaboration with the Nigeria Police Force to apprehend the attackers and prevent similar incidents in the future.

"As investigations continue, the resilience and cooperation of the community with law enforcement agencies will be crucial in addressing these issues and restoring peace," Obasi said.

While Akpoha people mourned, their counterparts in Isu community, Onicha LGA also experienced their own bout of grief over killings.

A ward councillor, Stanley Akpa Nwaeze, and his friend, Arinze Joshua Ugochukwu, a youth leader, were slain.

Nwaeze represented Enugu ward in the local legislative council while Ugochukwu, a native of Amagu Mbom in Isu community, was the LGA Coordinator of National Youth Council of Nigeria (NYCN) and secretary, Ebonyi State College of Education, Ikwo, Alumnus Association.

The incident occurred on June 3, after Ugochukwu visited Nwaeze in Enugu and was seeing him off to Isu when they were waylaid by the gunmen.

The senator representing Ebonyi South Senatorial District, Prof. Anthony Ani, and several other leaders have condemned the mindless killings.

The senator described the incident as barbaric, inhuman, tragic and condemnable, even as he called on security agencies to do everything within their power to apprehend the perpetrators to face the full weight of the law.

He cautioned that no one had the power to take another person's life, no matter the level of provocation, and that no evil act will go unpunished.

In a statement by his senior legis-

lative aide, Dr. Ogbonnaya Aja, the senator commiserated with the families of the victims and the people of Onicha and Isu communities over the loss of the two illustrious youths.

He stated that they were serving their communities diligently and meritoriously in different capacities.

Isu community has been witnessing killings and kidnapping for two years.

In one of the incidents, a lady's body was found along a bush path between Agbebor Isu and Onicha-Igboeze communities in the area. She was raped and killed and her underwear was taken away.

This happened as the community was looking for its traditional ruler, Ogbu, who was abducted from his palace.

The community also lost its president general, palace secretary and some other prominent figures. These community leaders were assassinated by gunmen in different circumstances.

In addition, gunmen had in August 2022, raided Galaxy Hotel in the community and killed three persons.

Owner of the hotel, Ogbonnaya Nwadike, an indigene of Anambra State, Henry Ezeani Chukwu, 43, who was a bodyguard to the 2023 PDP governorship candidate in the state, Chief Ifeanyi Chukwuma Odii, and Alexander Ekwe Okorie, 52, a native of Uluokee, Amanator Isu, were the victims.

Similarly, criminals have not spared Ohaukwu LGA in Ebonyi North Senatorial District. Gunmen have been attacking security agents and residents of the community with many of them killed since this year. On June 11, they killed Ikechukwu Idenyi Ali, a youth in Ngbo community.

Daily Sun gathered that the assailants stormed Okwor Market in the community, where the deceased owned a shop, and killed him. It was gathered that they shot him severally when he was locking his shop.

Two months ago, a hotel belonging to the local government chairman, Ikechukwu Odono, was attacked and some vehicles parked on the premises were burnt. One person was killed in the attack.

Odono confirmed the incident, saying: "Actually, yesterday, around 10pm, gunmen came to our village market, Okwor, on a motor bike and shot one Mr. Ikechukwu Ali Idenyi while he was locking up his shop.

"This morning, when the information came to me, I quickly went there, alongside Deputy Speaker of Ebonyi State House of Assembly, Chief Chinedu Onah, policemen and other relevant political stakeholders of Ohaukwu Local Government Area who condemned the gravity of the crime.

"When I got there, many youths of that community were a staging peaceful demonstration to condemn the painful killing of the deceased in his shop and, after addressing them, I made sure that no life or property was tampered with."

Police public relations officer in the state, Joshua Ukandu, a deputy superintendent of police, also confirmed the Ohaukwu incident but disclosed that security operatives were already deployed to the community.

Pillars for transformation, growth of logistics in Nigeria unveiled



•L-R: Saint Louvent, Akanni-Shelle and Rocher at the official unveiling of AGL in Lagos

By Steve Agbota

AFRICA Global Logistics (AGL), the leading logistics solutions provider in Africa, has been formally launched in Lagos, with the company unveiling its strategic plans for the transformation and growth of the logistics landscape in Nigeria.

The official unveiling ceremony of the leading multimodal logistics operator was held in Lagos and witnessed by many dignitaries, including the representative of the Governor of Lagos State, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu, among others.

Formerly known as Bolloré Africa Logistics, AGL is set to redefine the logistics landscape in Nigeria, delivering unparalleled services and driving economic growth and development.

The rebranding of AGL in Nigeria represents a pivotal advancement in reinforcing the company's footprint on the continent and harnessing the potential of Nigeria's dynamic logistics sector.

In his welcome address at the unveiling ceremony, the country managing director of AGL Nigeria, Etienne Rocher, said: "Today marks more than just a rebranding for us. It symbolises our evolution, our growth and our dedication to shaping the future of logistics in Nigeria.

"We are immensely grateful for your presence here as our esteemed clients, partners, suppliers and integral stakeholders. Your trust and collaboration have been instrumental in our success and we look forward to continuing to serve you with even greater efficiency and innovation."

Rocher said the official unveiling of the AGL brand in Nigeria marked a new era of commitment to the country's growth, signifying a strong dedication to elevating logistics standards and driving Nigeria's economic evolution, where

excellence in logistics meets the heartbeat of Africa.

Also speaking, CEO, maritime services and chief investment officer of AGL, Stanislas de Saint Louvent, said the organization embraced the values of its parent company, the MSC Group.

The values, according to him, "include humility, passion for our business, agility to adapt to our environment and clients' needs and solidarity".

He said: "As the leading multimodal logistics operator in Africa, with over a century of expertise offering global, customised, and innovative solutions, AGL's ambition is to contribute substantially to Africa's transformation.

"AGL is committed to enhancing end-to-end logistics supply chain continuity across Africa through its port terminals, railway operations and logistics set up in every African country. Our intention is also to support the development of the African continental free trade area, as we believe it is very important for the development of the continent.

"This affiliation empowers us to improve our service offer in our port terminals, expand territorial service solutions, and invest in the professional development of our 23,000-strong workforce across Africa.

"By nurturing local talent and promoting diversity through specialised training programmes, we contribute to addressing Africa's demographic challenges while advancing digital transformation."

Stanislas de Saint Louvent also reiterated AGL's commitment to strengthening intra-African trade by offering innovative logistics solutions tailored to the needs of trade players to enhance the competitiveness of trade corridors and support the industrialisation of Africa.

Also speaking, the CEO of Africa Global Logistics &

Transport Nigeria, Sade Akanni-Shelle, said AGL has evolved with Nigeria's development and remained committed to the country's potential through both good and challenging times.

She said: "We continue to invest in solutions to support the needs of our customers while adapting to changes in geopolitics and the macro economy.

"As we introduce the four key pillars of our strategy — digitalisation, energy transition, intra-African trade, and investment in local talent — we are excited to embark on this journey of growth and transformation in Nigeria.

"At AGL Nigeria, we firmly believe in creating job opportunities as a means to empower individuals and communities. Our efforts to diversify our expertise are evident in several strategic initiatives. We are expanding into temperature-controlled warehousing, a critical need for many industries. We are re-opening an inland container depot in Ijanikin to streamline logistics and improve efficiency.

"Furthermore, we are renewing our focus in Oil and Gas logistics through AGL Oil and Gas Services. These initiatives are not just about business growth; they are about replicating the success stories we have recorded in other African countries right here in Nigeria, creating further employment opportunities," she said.

In his address, Sanwo-Olu, represented by the state Commissioner for Commerce, Cooperative, Trade and Investment, Folasade Ambrose, commended AGL for its "relentless pursuit of excellence."

He expressed confidence that the formal unveiling of the company will create more jobs and contribute to the GDP of the state and the country, in addition to facilitating trade across Nigeria.



•Odono