

Narrow escape

21st January 2025



Manin building burnt

- Family misses death by the whiskers as thugs set their home ablaze while sleeping

From **Uchenna Inya**, Abakaliki

The story of Nwobasi Ude Chizoba's family in Umuigboke Ufuota, Ugwulangwu community in Ohaozara Local Government Area of Ebonyi State is heartrending.



Nwobasi's family stranded

The family of nine is now homeless after the houses the man laboured for years to build were burnt by some members of the community on the allegation that Nwobasi's loyalists were responsible for the death of a member of the community, Unah Benjamin, who was shot dead on November 8, 2024 by yet-to-be identified persons in the area.

The arsonists also burnt other property in those buildings, including motorcycles, maize gridding machine, his credentials and other valuables. They also took away N5.3million his younger brother who is operating a Point of Sales (PoS) business for him withdrew from the bank. The perpetrators invaded the victim's compound at about 2am of January, 12, 2025 and carried out the mayhem.



Nwobasi's houses and properties burnt

Apart from Nwobasi's property that were burnt, the arsonists went to the shop of the Town Union President located at the market square and destroyed 900 bags of cement in the shop. They opened the cement and poured water on all of them.

They also went to one Egbe Nwogu's shop and burnt everything in it completely. They equally went to the shop of a man popularly known as Enitex, who is the chairman of the market traders in the community, brought out everything inside the shop and burnt them.

Nwobasi Ude Chizoba, former PDP chairman, Ohaozara LGA, who is now national youth president of Ugwulangwu Ezeokechima, was not at home when the arsonists invaded his compound and burnt things. He has been running for his dear life since November 8 following the allegation that his boys were responsible for the murder of Unah.

His wife, Nneoma, and their seven children were around when the incident occurred. They were in deep sleep when the buildings were set ablaze.

Smokes from the fire woke the woman from the deep sleep; it was difficult for her to locate the door for escape. She, however, succeeded and took all her children out of the fire.

All of them including the woman were naked when they escaped. Nneoma and her seven children slept in the bush when they came out of the fire. They were seen without clothes by members of the community who clothed them when they came out of the bush in the morning.

She narrated her ordeal to Daily Sun when our correspondent visited her and his children in the community. She said: “There was a burial in our community and my husband was accused by a prominent stakeholder in our community of sending his loyalists to kill the man that was being buried. Policeman came and arrested some persons over the man’s killing.

“On 12th January, 2025, we went to bed after our activities of the day. Around 2:10am, we started hearing noise. The noise was so heavy and I carried my last child and placed here on my back and before I could notice, they have already invaded our compound.

“They immediately poured a substance on the roof of our building after entering our compound and set everywhere ablaze. They went and carried our water tank at back of one of our buildings in the compound and set it ablaze and the fire became more intense, burning everywhere severely.

“I and my children became trapped in the house. We couldn’t know where to follow to escape. I started looking for a way of escape and succeeded. Smoke from the fire covered everywhere. So, I managed and got to the door, opened it and started bringing out my children. We were all naked when we were coming out of the fire.

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“One of them rushed towards me and ordered that we should go inside the house that was on fire. One of them who knows me very well as a classroom teacher opposed him and told him no, that it can’t happen. That person said we can’t enter inside the house, that I am his mama and warned that nothing should happen to his ‘mama general’. That person held me and took me out of the compound. From there, I and my children followed a bush path and ran away.”

The woman alleged that the prominent person from the family who sent his loyalists to perpetrate the incident, had been angry that her husband brought back the man’s wife to him from the market

square she had been living since 19 years the man sent her parking over irreconcilable issues in their marriage.

“This man has been a torn in the flesh of members of this community. He has been tormenting my husband since last year our community decided that any married woman in our community who is not living with her husband must be taken to the husband.

“As chairman of our community, my husband directed women of our community to take the woman back to her husband. When woman was taken to him, he got angry that since 19 years, nobody had the gut to take the woman to him and vowed to deal with my husband, saying that my husband was a small person to try such a thing when nobody tried it,” she further said.

Nwobasi corroborated his wife. He noted that after Unah Benjamin was shot dead, the prominent person accused him and 13 other members of the community of killing the man.

He explained: “When he did that, he reported to security agents. The security agents came and arrested one man called Michael Okorie, who is languishing in detention at the Afikpo Correctional Center where he was remanded.

“As tradition demands in our place, Ugwulangwu, we don’t bury people during festive period like January. But to my greatest surprise, the funeral dates of this man were fixed for January 12 and 13 this year.

“When the burial date was fixed, the man said that the reason for fixing the burial date on 12 and 13 January was to for his boys to be around so that they will avenge the killing. I don’t know who killed the man because that incident happened in the night.

“On 10th January, I got intelligence that my house and family members will be attacked. I immediately alerted the divisional police officer of Ohaozara LGA because they are after my life. Since the November 8 the man was killed, they have been planning to eliminate me and my family members. They have been sending thugs to achieve their aims.

“They have sent so many people after me and I have run out of the community That was why I was not around when they eventually attacked my compound and burnt my houses and other things..

“So, that 10th January they came, I had to send text messages when I got the intelligence. I sent messages to the DPO of Ohaozara LGA, O/C DSS, coordinator of Ohaozara LGA but none of these persons acted on the messages. Nobody acted on that intelligence.

“Then on the 12th January which was the wake for the deceased, around 2am, they all marched to my compound and set all my houses and everything inside the houses ablaze. My wife and my children were in deep sleep, it was the smoke from the fire they put on my houses that woke her up to know that something was happening. She managed to get the door, opened it and managed to pull my children out of the compound.

“They burnt everything to ashes. They brought all my documents outside and set them ablaze. They burnt three motorcycles in my house and took one out of the home.

“When they were burning all these things and looting everything in my compound, I called the police. I called the DPO around 2am and informed him about what they were doing. I called the DSS person and his number was not going. I dropped text message for him and I called other personalities in the community to know if there was any way they could rescue my family and my documents but all to know avail.

“They later went to our family house in the market and destroyed everything there. They also burnt motorcycles there. They collected my younger brother’s iphone, smashed it and looted the things that were inside the house there. They took away N5.3million my younger brother, who is doing PoS business for me, withdrew from the bank.

“After doing this, they left to the town union president’s shop located at the market square and destroyed 900 bags of cement there. They opened the cement and poured water on all of them. They went to one Egbe Nwegu’s shop too and burnt everything to ashes. They also went to the shop of Enitex who is the chairman of the market traders in the community, brought out everything inside the shop and burnt them.

“I am begging for help from different quarters. As you can see, I and my family are homeless; we don’t have any place to sleep. We don’t have any food to eat. We don’t have anything as it stands now. The only cloth I am wearing now is the only cloth I have.

“My children have no clothes to wear because all their clothes were burnt. They all ran out of the fire naked, including my wife. It was somebody that gave her wrapper, she ran out of the fire naked.

“I am in big pains, I am deeply touched. I am begging Governor Francis Nwifuru and all well meaning Nigerians to come to my aid. My condition is very pathetic . As it stands, I am not in my home, they are still hunting for me till now. What have I done to deserve all these treatment?”

Nwobasi Ude Okechukwu, a member of the Nwobasi family, expressed sadness over the incident and called on security agents to bring the perpetrators to book.