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Ebonyi communal clash: 800 persons still missing – Traditional ruler

From Goddy Osuji, Abakaliki

Monday, January 2, 2012

The traditional ruler of Ezillo Ishielu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Eze Chima Onyibe, claimed that close to 800 persons from his area were still missing after the dawn raid by armed men, just as he said he narrowly escaped death in the hands of the hoodlums. He added that his sons were not lucky while his home, cars and other belongings were destroyed.

He spoke as the Assistant Inspector General (AIG) of Police Zone 9, Saidu Daya, visited the scene of the devastating mass murder of innocent women and children. The traditional ruler pleaded with the people to shelve any plans to revenge, calling on them rather to leave the matter to the police. The AIG hinted that a police mobile force post would be erected at Ezillo in Ishielu Council Area of Ebonyi State to put a permanent stop to the guerilla attacks from suspected Ezza militants trying to renew the hostilities of the Ezza/Ezillo communal crisis.

He assured the people that the command was doing everything possible to curtail the attacks pointing out that he was visiting to condole with them and convey the sympathy of the Inspector of General of Police, Hafiz Ringim.

Conducted round the gory sites by the Ebonyi State Commissioner of Police, Adeola A. Adeniji and the Divisional Police Officer of Ishielu, Franklin Nuudam, the AIG added that he came from Calabar to see things for himself stressing that immediately the IGP heard of the carnage he mandated him to come to Abakaliki and evaluate the scale and extent of the crime.

"What we are pleading with you is that you shelve any plans to revenge; leave the matter to the police. The IG said I should convey his heartfelt sympathy and assure you of all round police protection. When I go back we shall explore the possibility of setting up a Mobile Police Station here to ensure that there is no repeat of such attacks and wanton killings," he told the people, adding that a crack team of detectives would be detailed to investigate the matter and bring the hoodlums to justice.

In his remarks the traditional ruler of Ezillo, Eze Chima Onyibe, pleaded with the AIG that no native of Ebonyi State should be included in the investigating team even as he recalled how some unscrupulous policemen posted to the place in the past started colluding with the invaders to perpetrate crimes against their people.

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Earlier in a statewide broadcast tagged, "That Evil May Not Endure," Ebonyi Governor, Martin Elechi, recalled how the crisis started from a mere squabble over the construction of a public telephone booth noting that "the current episode was a phase in the cycle of destruction and bloodletting which have been the lot of Ezillo since Saturday, May 10, 2008 when the crisis started." He added: "The shock waves sent by the latest incident are not only because of the wantonness of the destruction but also because it came at a time when Ebonyi people and other Nigerians thought that peace had returned to Ezillo."

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