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## Abia: Policeman kills youth leader, injures three

January 17, 2020 Correspondents



### Emmanuel Ifeanyi

A policeman, attached to the Enyimba Economic City Land Acquisition Committee has been accused of killing a youth leader, Mr. Nwamaka Ogbuji, at Ugwuati community in Ukwa West Local Government Area of Abia State.

The incident, which led to the shooting and subsequent killing of Ogbuji, occurred on Wednesday. It was learnt that the committee visited Ugwuati community to finalise acquisition of land for the much-talked about Enyimba Economic City (EEC). The meeting ended in violence.

Trouble started when Ogbuji and the rest of the youth refused to accept the take-over of their land, stressing that they were farmers and couldn't afford to lose their land.

Aside from Ogbuji, who was shot and later died, three other people sustained bullet wounds. The three victims are said to be in hospital battling to live.

A source said: "The youth were unarmed. They gathered at the town's hall to listen to the committee members. The youth explained to the delegation that they were not prepared to mortgage their lives for a project they didn't understand. It was when the arguments started that the policemen that came with the government delegation started shooting indiscriminately. Our people are not stupid. They didn't fight anybody. They only refused to give out their land to people they didn't trust.

"Go to Obuaku city, you'll see how land was acquired there some years back. Now, they have come with this story of Enyimba Economic City, which we don't believe is a serious

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thing. The people are even afraid they might use our land for RUGA. You can't just take away people's land without their approval."

The Coordinator, Centre for Youth Care and Human Rights Awareness (CYHRA), Mr. Chukwuemeka Mba, called on the state Governor, Dr. Okezie Ikpeazu, and the Senator representing Abia South, Enynnaya Abaribe, to investigate the situation and punish those responsible for wasting Ogbuji's life.

He said: "We don't know the circumstances leading to this, but a life has been taken, something must be done. There is no justification in the killing of anyone. People have a right to say no to the sale of their land. If the elders want to sell land and the youth believe it will be like mortgaging their future, the best thing is to dialogue and reach a peaceful agreement. The state government needs to take action. The senator representing the zone needs to take action and see this to the end."

The state Commissioner of Police, Ene Okon, while confirming the incident, said that something happened before the police officers opened fire at the meeting.

He said: "Last week, the state government wrote and asked us to bring some security to accompany Enyimba Economic City Committee members to attend the meeting. The policemen were sent as requested by the state government. If the community had a problem, they should have sorted it out among themselves. But my information is that the community people disagreed. In the process, the youth trooped out in large numbers, attacked the policemen and abducted members of the committee.

"They attacked the policemen and some of them attempted to snatch rifles from the policemen. As they were struggling, a rifle fired. The bullet strayed and killed one of them, while the other two people were injured. When I was told, I had to send re-enforcement to rescue three members of the committee that were abducted. That is the extent the youth in the place can be lawless. If you have problem over land with the government, you don't need to attack people. You take it to the government, not to attack the police or the people sent to do whatever the government asked them to do. They (youths) were armed with machetes."

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