

## 15 Killed, Houses Razed In Ebonyi NURTW Members' Clash

January 25, 2021 Uchenna Inya ABAKALIKI Comments Off

At least 15 people were killed during a clash between members of rival groups of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), Effium branch in Ohaukwu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

Trouble started on Saturday when members loyal to the chairman and the secretary of the union in Effium clashed, leading to loss of lives with property burnt.

The clash escalated to intra-tribal clash between the people of Effium and Ezza Effium in the area with loss of more lives and over 50 houses and other valuables razed.

But the state police command said only seven people were killed while eight houses were burnt in the melee. Following the incident, three aides of Governor Dave Umahi and over 20 other stakeholders from the area were arrested.

Their arrest was at the instance of the Deputy Governor, Kelechi Igwe.

Also yesterday, the state Police Commissioner, Aliyu Garba, arrested the Chairman of Ohaukwu Local Government Area, Clement Odah, and the lawmaker representing Ohaukwu North State Constituency, Chinedu Awo, over the killings and destruction of property in the community.

About 30 other major stakeholders from the community, including the Coordinator of Effium Development Centre, Sunday Agbo, and his Effium South Development Centre counterpart, Eucharia Ogwale, were arrested.

Also arrested were Mr. Emmanuel Uzor, a former Chief Press Secretary (CPS) to the governor and currently the Special Assistant to the governor on Market Development and his counterpart in Charge of Parks Development, Emmanuel Igwe.

The former lawmaker representing Ohaukwu North State Constituency and Governor Umahi's Special Assistant on Youth Development, Frank Onwe, was also among those arrested.

Their arrest, it was learnt, was on the orders of the Deputy Governor, Igwe. Igwe had, in a statement yesterday, invited the stakeholders and appointees to an emergency security meeting following the violence in the community on Friday and Saturday.

The meeting, which held at old Government House, also had in attendance the Chief Judge of the state, Justice Anselm Nwigwe, who is also from the community, Secretary to the State Government

(SSG), Kenneth Ugba, and the Commissioner for Internal Security and Conflict Resolution, Stanley Okoro Emegha.

The invitees arrived at the Executive Chambers of the old Government House at 9a.m.

The meeting started with the Deputy Governor and Commissioner of Police, Garba, in attendance. About 10a.m., close to 10 police vans drove into the compound from the Police Headquarters across the road. The policemen surrounded the building where the meeting was being held.

A few moments later, the Commissioner of Police, Garba, opened the door and ordered the policemen to take the invitees away except the Justice Nwigwe.

They were immediately ordered into two waiting buses belonging to the Ministry of Internal Security from where they were driven to the state Police Headquarters building opposite

the old Government House. Igwe visited the community where he gave a shooton- sight order for anybody seen in the community from 4p.m. daily. He was led on the visit by the security chiefs in the state with their men. The deputy governor later addressed hundreds of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) at Effium Police Station where they were taking refuge. He said: “We will put all those whose hands are in this crisis in prison.

We will make sure they are behind bars, no matter how highly placed.” The team, comprising policemen, soldiers, personnel of the Department of State Services (DSS), among others, also visited hideouts of the warlords and arrested over 60 people from the community in connection to the incident. Arms, ammunition, charms and substances suspected to be hard drugs, were recovered from the suspects who were taken to police headquarters where they were paraded.

The police chief, Garba, vowed that police would deal decisively with troublemakers. He said all the stakeholders from the community arrested in connection with the incident would remain in custody until peace returned to the community.

Garba told journalists that seven people were killed in the crisis while eight houses were burnt. Meanwhile, residents have deserted the community with churches, markets and schools shut.

The Ebonyi State government has imposed curfew on Effium in Ohaukwu Local Government Area of the state, as a step towards restoring peace in the community. A statement by the Commissioner for Information and Orientation, Mr. Uchenna Orji, said that Governor Umahi condemned the mayhem.

“The governor deeply frowns at the unabated violence and wanton destruction of lives and property in Effium community. “In his determination to restore peace and order, the governor has imposed a curfew on Effium community from 4p.m. to 8a.m. daily, with effect from January 24.

“The governor further directs security agencies to ensure strict enforcement of the curfew,” the commissioner stated.

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