

Land dispute: Furore in Anambra community over man's death

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Transition Chairman of Ogbaru Local Government Area, Hon. Arinze Ayogu, and the traditional ruler of Atani, Ogbaru, Igwe Azuka Ngoddy, have been fingered in the death of a member of Atani Council of Chiefs, Egbuna Mbanefo.

Mbanefo was murdered at his place of work in the community on April 1, 2021.

It was learnt that the victim went to a building site to do a manual job, but did not return. His body was found the next day, when his friends and family members went in search of him.

A member of the community, Chijioke Mbanefo, who said the deceased was his uncle, linked the tragedy to a land dispute, which he said, involved a piece of land belonging to the Umuoniha kindred in the community.

He said: "Umuoniha Kindred has very massive land at different areas

within Atani community. Members of a particular group in the kindred called Ogene family, were selling the land belonging to the kindred in general, and were telling people that the land belonged to them alone."

Chijioke claimed that Ayogu, to compensate the

Ogene family for the massive land sold to him, appointed one of their sons, Nwike Ogene, as transition councillor in the council area.

He also claimed that Igwe Ngoddy, to also compensate the Ogene family for the land sold to him, removed the youth president of Atani community, Arinze Nzeli, and single-handedly appointed a member of the Ogene family, Chukwudi, as the community's youth president.

Claiming that Ayogu and Ngoddy sponsored Mbanefo's murder because of their interest in the land, Chijioke appealed to the authorities to inter-



Mbanefo's body

vene, and restore normalcy to Atani.

However, when contacted, Ngoddy and Ayogu denied knowing anything about Mbanefo's death.

Ngoddy said he did not know from the onset that the land in question was in dispute.

He said: "I was in the United States when one of my workers informed me that there was a parcel of land for sale. He told me the land was genuine, so we bought it.

"There was no link between the land dispute and Egbuna Mbanefo's death. Nobody killed him. He collapsed and died at a building site where he was

working. It was believed he was having a heart-related problem. He died and his family wanted to use his death to score a point in the dispute."

Also, Ayogu admitted that he purchased 150 plots of land from the disputed area; but said that he made the purchase on behalf of an agro company, which consulted him for that purpose.

He urged Mbanefo's family to make a proper report to the police, indicating those they suspected to be involved in the murder, if any.

The state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Tochukwu Iken-ga, said the command was working on the report.

He said: "The matter was reported a few days ago, and we're working on it. We're making efforts to get everybody involved. Our investigation will determine the next line of action. But I will assure you that the police will unravel the mystery behind his death; if we failed to do so, more of such will happen."