

Soldiers killed three over land dispute –Edo community

Francis Ogbuagu
BENIN

Elders and indigenes of Illushi community in Esan South East Local Government Area of Edo State have raised the alarm over the killing of some of their youths by military men.

They alleged that soldiers, allegedly sponsored by Samuel Offor, Imawa, Abamu and the Director of Skaff International Agro Farms Limited, Anthony Skaff, carried out the dastardly act.

The Youths Chairman, Illushi community, Lucky Chibogwu, told journalists yesterday that on April 13, 2021, about 3pm, some trucks loaded with soldiers came into the community.

He said the soldiers started shooting, beating up men and women, burning houses, and that before they knew it, three people had been shot dead.

Chibogwu said the residents didn't know what happened, the only thing they knew was that the soldiers were allegedly sponsored by three people who were currently fighting the community over the leasing of over 5,000 hectares of land to a Lebanese.

The elders of the community said there was a kingship tussle pending before the state High Court sitting at Uromi. It was while the matter was pending in court that Offor allegedly connived with some others to purportedly lease about 5,000 hectares of the community land, and that didn't go down well with the people.

The land dispute is also in court, according to the elders. Although the matter is in court, it did not stop harassment and intimidation of the community members opposed to the lease. According to them, many of those opposed to the lease were arrested.

The elders alleged that two people, Stephen Oyibo and Jimoh Araba, were arrested and detained under the pretext of a police invitation to settle the dispute between them and Skaff, after their plantations were reportedly destroyed by Skaff.

The most recent of the series of harassment that finally claimed three lives involved the invasion of the community by soldiers.

"It was on 13th of April by 3 pm 2021 trucks load of soldiers came into our community. The soldiers started shooting and beating everybody. Before we knew it, three people were shot dead. Even till now, four of our youths are still missing. We didn't do anything, we didn't fight them."

Reacting to the allegations, Offor denied the allegations and said he knew nothing about the killings.

Offor alleged that the residents were the ones fighting him because of his property which they allegedly took from him.

The PRO 4th Brigade of the Nigerian Army could not be reached for comment on the allegations that soldiers killed three people in the community.

The PRO neither picked several calls put across to him nor responded to text messages sent to his mobile phone.