

MegaCity

Isu Onicha: Community troubled by killers, kidnappers

Uchenna Inya
ABAKALIKI



Police tactical team

Isu community in Onicha Local Government Area of Ebonyi State used to be one of the most peaceful and crime-free communities in the state.

But since this year evil has continue to thrive in the area with kidnappings, killings and rapes being carried out by evil men who are now having field day in the area.

① A lady whose name was yet to be ascertained was recently killed in the community. She was found along a bush part between Aegbebor Isu and Onicha-Igboeze communities in the area. She was raped and murdered and her underwear taken away by the hoodlums.

Panic

The incident caused panic in the area and its environs. The residents alleged that herdsmen perpetrated the act.

But the state government has denied allegations that herdsmen were involved in the killing of the young lady.

Pictures of the slain lady flooded the social media with unconfirmed allegations that herdsmen were responsible for her murder.

In the pictures, the victim was seen lying lifeless on a pile of firewood with her throat slit.

No evidence

The state government in a statement by the Commissioner for Information, Uchenna Orji said there was no evidence so far to link the murder to herdsmen adding that there is no herdsmen residing in the area.

He said the victim is believed to have been attacked led by criminal elements in the area while she was returning from a neighbouring village.

He said: "Our attention has been drawn to a trending social media post over a young girl found dead in a village in Onicha Local Government Area of Ebonyi State and the impressions created over the circumstances of her death."

"While the state government condemns the ugly incident as unacceptable brutal murder of an innocent citizen by heartless criminals, it is

imperative to note that contrary to the claims circulating in social media that Fulani herders were responsible for her gruesome murder, the community has not seen anything linking her death with the Fulani herdsmen, more so there is no herders' camp in the area.

"The unfortunate incident is the handiwork of yet to be identified criminals who attacked and killed the deceased on her way through a track road, back from where she went to process cassava at Aegbebor village in Isu community of Onicha Local Government Area," he said.

Police spokesperson, Chris Anyanwu confirmed the incident. He noted that the lady's underwear was missing raising suspicion by the villagers that she was raped before being killed.

"We have commenced investigation into the incident. People are alleging that she was raped because they couldn't find her underwear."

"But only a forensic analysis can reveal if anything like that happened," he said.

Till today, no arrest has been made over the killing and raping of the young lady.

Escaping death

Last month, Prof Okey Reuben Okechukwu, Provost of the newly established Federal College of Education, Technical, Isu, in the community, narrowly escaped death when gunmen attacked him.

The incident happened near the boundary of Isu Onicha Local Government Area and Agba in Ishielu LGA of the state.

Okechukwu was in a Mercedes jeep leading a convoy of about five vehicles from his office at the temporary site of the college in Isu back to Abakaliki, after work, when the incident happened.

Also in the car with the provost was the College Librarian, Lawal Shuaibu, a police orderly, two aides to the provost and the driver.

Eye witnesses narrated that the incident occurred when the convoy was moving on the Agba Bridge, where sand sacks were used to block the road.

"A young unarmed man sprang out, waving down the car, while suddenly a group of armed men trooped out from nearby bush aiming at the car."

"As the driver attempted to reverse, they (kidnappers) opened fire on the provost's car and the car swerved into the bush, but the first gun shot hit the librarian, Shuaibu at the back of his neck, while the second wounded the driver on the forehead."

"While inside the bush, the occupants of

the car opened the doors and ran for their lives as another bullet hit Shuaibu again at shoulder and he fell down but still managed to crawl away.

"The driver who found a track road met another group who attacked him with stones and sticks until the sudden arrival of a team of police men from the Isu Division of the Nigerian Police, who rescued and took him to hospital."

It was learnt that the second vehicle, was a Tundra van conveying TETFUND consultants from Abuja who came to oversee the bid opening at the college, it reversed and immediately went to the Isu Police Division to alert the police.

Police

Following the report, the police swiftly swung into action and disorganised the assailants.

According to another witness, the third vehicle in the convoy was a Toyota Camry conveying some staff of the college; the car drove very near to the scene and received a gunshot that blew off one of the front tires but knocked down one of the assailants while reversing to Isu community.

"Before the arrival of the Police team from Isu and subsequent arrival of the team from the state command, Abakaliki, the hoodlums had already looted and burnt the Mercedes jeep."

"Fortunately the police teams combed the bushes and rescued the provost, the librarian and the police orderly while the other two aides to the provost escaped through the river to Agba Community from where they were taken back to Abakaliki."

Kidnapped traditional ruler

These terrible incidents happened while the Isu community was still looking for its traditional ruler, HRH, Ambrose Ogbu who was kidnapped over seven months ago and has not been seen till today.

Nobody knows the Traditional Ruler's whereabouts. Many believed that he may have been killed by his abductors.

The community also lost its President General, Palace Secretary and some other prominent members as they were assassinated by unknown persons.

② The area was also attacked a few months ago precisely on August 24 when gunmen invaded a hotel in the community, Galaxy and killed three persons.

Those killed included, Henry Ezeani.

Chukwu, 43, an indigene of Anambra State, Augustine Ogbonnaya Nwadike the proprietor of the hotel and indigene of Mbom Amator Isu, Alexander Ekwu Okorie, a native of Uhuoke Amator Isu.

A resident of the community Igwe Nwakor, said the gunmen came on motorcycles with arms, about three of them, and entered the hotel.

"Before we knew what was happening, we started to hear gun shots that lasted for some minutes. After which, they left and three persons were found dead, including the owner of the hotel," he explained.

The state's Police Public Relations Officer, Chris Anyanwu, a Superintendent of Police, confirmed the incident.

"Yes, the Command has heard about the incident but we have not gotten the full detail of what really happened," Anyanwu stated.

Earlier in the month of May, the state police command Tactical Operation Teams, the military and DSS embarked on an operation which led to the killing of three gunmen in the area.

A policeman, however, paid the supreme sacrifice during the operation as he was killed by the gunmen during a shootout with the security agents.

Bishop's response

Anglican Bishop of Afikpo Diocese, Ebonyi State Rev Paul Udogu, has condemned the killings and kidnappings in Onicha Isu.

Udogu said the church was worried about the recent assassination and spilling of innocent blood in Isu community.

Udogu spoke at the church's Cathedral, Afikpo, Afikpo North local government area of the state during his charge at the 6th synod of the church.

He noted that the traditional ruler of the Isu community in the state, HRH Ambrose Ogbu, was kidnapped six months ago and has not been released till today.

He disclosed that the President General of the community, Palace Secretary of the community and some other prominent members of the community have all been assassinated.

"The people of Isu live in serious fear as many people have migrated to safe areas. Nobody can say exactly what is happening at Isu."

"We call upon the Dave Umahi-led Ebonyi State Government to use her instruments of power to discover the remote and immediate causes of the Isu trouble and proffer solution to the problem. We also appeal to the perpetrators of this act to lay down their arms and use dialogue to resolve whatever the problem is," Udogu said.