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Medical student electrocuted as violence claims 2 lives in Enugu

By Tony Edike

Posted to the Web: Saturday, August 25, 2007

ENUGU—TRAGEDY struck in Enugu Thursday night when an 18-year-old medical student of Imo State University, Owerri was electrocuted at his residence.

Two other persons have also been reported dead in a violent clash at Orie Agboruo village in Amechi, Awkunanaw near Enugu over payment of electricity bill.

Saturday Vanguard learnt that the incident occurred in front of the deceased student's house at 21 Ibiam Street, Uwani in Enugu South Local Government Area.

The deceased identified as Uchenna Raphael Eke mistakenly leaned on a wall erected by the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) to protect an electric transformer recently installed near his residence shortly after he had finished washing clothes at about 7 pm on that fateful day.

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An eyewitness said the young man was electrocuted immediately he touched the wall near the transformer and gave up the ghost before sympathizers could rush him to a nearby hospital for treatment.

Uchenna, a native of Urualla town in Ideato North Local Government Area of Imo State who was said to be the only son out of his father's four children had recently launched a literary work.

Some residents in the neighborhood, who spoke on the unfortunate incident, said that the electrocution might not be unconnected with the ongoing installation of pre-paid meters in the street by PHCN contractors.

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Father of the deceased, Mr. Eke Raphael a trader at Kenyatta market, Enugu, speaking on the demise of his son, said the incident had thrown him off balance, adding that it was the worst thing that had befallen him.

Eke who spoke in Igbo language wept profusely saying, "I cannot imagine myself staying alive to see my only son die in such a tragic manner. I am yet to understand what happened to my son yesterday. Where do I go from here".

In a related development, sources said two persons were feared dead in a communal clash at Orie Agboruo village in Amechi, Awkunanaw following disagreements regarding the modalities for payment of electricity bills sent to the community.

Twelve others including a Customary Court President were said to have sustained injuries following attacks by a group of youths suspected to be thugs.

It was gathered that the crisis in the community started when some of the villagers this month questioned what they called outrageous bill from PHCN in Enugu, demanding that the PHCN agent should stop collecting bill from the community.

According to the spokesman of the Orie Agboruo community, Chief Francis Nnaji, the agents of the PHCN allegedly went from house to house beating up those who questioned the huge bill given to them.

Nnaji maintained that bulk payment of bill should be reversed for individual bill, stressing that some people were benefiting from the system against collective interest.

'These fraudulent people prefer stipends, bribe or kickback to their respective pockets to collecting monies meant for PHCN from these ignorant community leaving this community today with huge un-paid bills", he alleged.

Principal Public Affairs Manager of PHCN, Mr. Eseme Udo said when contacted yesterday that he was yet to be briefed about the two incidents, assuring that the management would investigate the issues according to their merits.

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