

5 die in Ezza, Ezillo clash

By Dennis Agbo

ABAKALIKI—NO fewer than five persons, mostly commuters traveling along the Enugu-Abakaliki expressway reportedly lost their lives in the renewed communal war between Ezza and Ezillo communities in Ishielu Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

The conflict which started two years ago, recently assumed a worrisome dimension with suspected hired militants confronting soldiers deployed in the war zone. As at weekend when *Vanguard* visited the expressway, soldiers had abandoned their duty posts in the area while movements between Enugu and Ebonyi had remained low with commercial drivers fearing being attacked or caught in the fighting. From Enugu to Abakaliki,

a journey of one hour, now takes up to three hours as drivers prefer to use the Okigwe-Afikpo-Abakaliki Roads for fear of being hit by bullets. A Civil Engineer, Okey Agbo, told our correspondent that he survived being shot along the road while traveling to Abakaliki with his car.

The Ebonyi State government had last week accused politicians from the state, who are resident in Abuja of being behind the renewed fighting, but one of the Abuja-based politicians told our reporter that the Elechi government was chasing shadows instead of living up to its responsibility of protecting the lives of its citizens.

One of the buses attacked during the weekend, according to eyewitness account, a 608 mini commuter bus was heading to Ogoja from Lagos, when it was attacked by the

hoodlums. Two survivors of the attack are currently receiving treatment at the Federal Medical Centre Abakaliki, where one of them, Richard Ogar from Ukele in Yala Local Government Area of Cross River State told our reporter that they were coming from Lagos, bringing home a corpse of one their relations when they ran into the gunmen.

“As we were driving, some of them came out from the bush and started firing their guns. They started pursuing us with motor cycles (*Okada*) and as we were trying to escape, to get to the Ishielu police post, our vehicle veered off into a ditch. I came out and ran inside the bush. When the gunmen got to the bus, they shot the driver and a relation of the deceased we were carrying home,” he narrated in tears.