

# News

## Gunmen kill 5, raze palace, 9 houses in Delta

BY EMMA AMAIZE

**UZERE, DELTA**—SUSPECTED militants have killed five persons, razed no fewer than 10 houses, including the palace of the Ovie of Uzere kingdom, Isoko South Local Government Area of Delta State, His Royal Majesty, Odhebeodhiwu Udogri 1, in renewed community violence.

Earlier report indicated that two persons lost their lives, but HRM Udogri I, who spoke to newsmen in Warri, said the death toll had escalated, just as he fingered a retired army general for the carnage.

Giving the genesis of the crisis, he said: "Prior to the 2011 general elections, the former Chief of Defence Staff sent emissaries to my palace with a view to luring me to support his candidate, who was contesting election into the Delta State House of Assembly on the platform of the Labour Party, LP."

Three villagers massacred in 2011, the traditional ruler's palace razed in an ensuing riot, and confrontation with security agents, after demonstrators from the community, angling for the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, MoU, laid siege to the Shell Petroleum Production Company, SPDC facility in Uzere.

Udogri I, however, asserted that the disturbance in the community had nothing to do with oil as alleged by some persons, stating, "my refusal to yield to their request on account of my position as a father to all may have angered the general".

His words, "I strongly believe that the negative utterances and attitude of the general towards my palace thereafter are tied to my refusal to endorse his candidate.

"There were other candidates that came to me for endorsement and it was the same position I took on the issue," he added.

According to him, "I am sure that was when he launched a war against the palace. Since then, we have not known peace in Uzere community. Several lives have been lost while properties worth millions of naira have been wasted in the land."

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