

Protests rock Enugu community over herdsmen attack

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By Dennis Agbo & Chinedu Adonu

ENUGU— YOUTHS, women, children and traditional rulers of Ozalla community in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State, yesterday, besieged Ozalla police station in protest, seeking security agents' protection of the community from alleged impending invasion of the community by herdsmen.



Indigenes of Ozalla community in Nkanu West Local Government Area of Enugu State during the protest over herdsmen attack on the community, yesterday. Photo: Dennis Agbo

The protesters also blocked Enugu-Port Harcourt expressway by four-corner junction, apparently to seek government's intervention.

The police had hectic moment dispersing the protesters that caused traffic gridlock along the busy highway.

They carried placards with inscriptions such as: "Enugu government, come to our rescue; Fulani, stop raping our women; Fulani release our chief security officer; Fulani, restore our farmlands; Fulani herdmen have chased us out of our homes; SOS: Come to our rescue now; Fulani leave Ozalla alone."

Two monarchs in the community, Igwe Casmir Chibuike and Igwe Crescent Okafor; a Catholic cleric, Rev Fr. Tobias Anichebe, and other leaders of the community held a meeting with officials of Ozalla police station to find solution to the situation in the community.

President-General of Umuanee-Ozalla Autonomous Community, Chief Okwudili Chianeke, said the crisis started last Friday when some herdsmen reported to the Police in Ozalla that one of their boys, 27-year-old Bassa Tobi, was killed in Ozalla.

Chianeke said: “They did not report to the traditional rulers, they came to the police and took the corpse. Later, we learned that the chief security officer of Ozalla community, Bonaventure Nwoye, had been arrested.

“When we came here (Ozalla police station), they insisted they will take Nwoye to the State CID and that is the situation we are.

“After that, on Saturday, herdsmen started threatening our people, especially women. What we are now telling the state government is that we are now refugees in our own town.”

Igwe Okafor, who spoke with newsmen after meeting with the police at Ozalla, said since 2016, when the community had a truce with the herdsmen to leave the community, there was relative peace until last weekend.

Igwe Okafor said: “I did not hear from them again until they picked up our chief security officer and our people started running for their lives, taking refuge at the police station.

“That was why we came to the police station because we don’t have any other protection except the Police.”

Chairman of Nkanu West Local Government Area, Mr. Afam Okekere, said the herdsmen refused autopsy proposed by the police and buried the corpse, citing religious belief.

He disclosed that herdsmen pointed accusing fingers at the head of vigilante in the community, which made the police to arrest the vigilante chief, even when the police had admitted there was no evidence of gun shot on the corpse.

Contacted, the state Police spokesman, Ebere Amaraizu, said the state command had begun investigations into the alleged murder.