

2 killed, houses, vehicles burnt in Anambra land dispute • IGP orders AIG Zone 13 to investigate

By Vincent Ujumadu

AWKA—A 70-year-old woman and middle-aged man have lost their lives, while several houses and vehicles worth millions of naira were destroyed in a land dispute at Nkwelle Ezunaka in Oyi local government area of Anambra State.

The land in dispute popularly known as Maryland, consists of several estates namely: Admiral, New Jerusalem, Top Star, Royal Paradise, One Heart, Trinity, Oganiru, God's Lane, Isuochi and Rock View, is owned by Umuobia Family of Amuche Ndiagu of Nkwelle Ezunaka in Oyi local government area.

The woman whose name was given as Mrs. Comfort Ani from Ugbawka in Nkanu, Enugu State, was the mother of one of the occupants in the estate. She is still in the mortuary.

She allegedly died of shock after witnessing the destruction of her son's mansion in the estate.

It was gathered that some people from a neighbouring village in the area on various occasions, swooped on the estate with suspected thugs and dangerous weapons during which the two persons lost their lives and property worth millions of naira were destroyed.

The Inspector General of Police, IGP, Mohammed Adamu, in a letter signed by his Principal Staff Officer, DCP Idowu Owuhunwa, has directed the Assistant Inspector General of Police, AIG, in charge of Zone 13, Ukpo-Dunukofia in Anambra State to investigate the incident immediately.

A member of the family that claimed ownership of the land, Mr. Ikenna Okafor, whose SUV car was burnt during the attack said generations of his family had lived on the said land without molestation and wondered why their neighbours from another village should start now to claim the land after the area was completely built up.

In an emotion-laden voice, Okafor said: "As early as 8.0am, our opponents started massive destruction of houses and burning of vehi-

cles. My Range Rover Sport was burnt beyond repair; I later contacted the Army Regiment in Onitsha who assisted us in towing the car to Awkuzu SARS where it is parked."

He added: "The land in question is known as Nwobia. We have been living there from birth. Our forefathers even lived there. Our family has been in possession of the land for many years."

"In 1922, our neighbouring community laid claim to the land and we defeated them in a court judgment and since then, peace had continued to reign until 2013 when someone from our neighbouring village who was chairman of our village vigilante trespassed into the land with caterpillars and thugs. My uncle who wanted to find out what was happening was attacked and he later died as a result of that attack."

"During the recent COVID-19 lockdown when everybody was indoors, they went into the land and dismantled the security tower mounted there. When we saw what happened, we petitioned the IGP who referred the matter to the Commissioner of Police Anambra State in July this year. By then, they had entered the land with thugs and used bulldozer to destroy buildings and vehicles."

"We rushed to 33 police stations where we made entry and the Divisional Crime Officer, DCO, there mobilized his men to the site. When they got there, the police discovered that a large number of thugs had laid siege on our land. He assured us that to the police headquarters in Awka would be contacted to invite the leader of the group who is well known at the police circle because of his position as our local vigilante chairman."

"On 28 July, they entered the land again and it was this time that they destroyed a Range Rover belonging to Uchechukwu Uka who is a member of my family. In fact, Uchechukwu narrowly escaped death as the thugs chased him away from the area."

According to him, "initially, it was the Anambra CP

that referred us to SARS Awkuzu. However, the action of SARS surprised us as they claimed that they could not enter the land because the thugs were too many."

"The following day, the thugs destroyed another pathfinder Jeep and set it ablaze and we informed SARS of the development. The SARS asked us to be prepared to take them to the people behind the mayhem to arrest them by 10 pm."

"When we got there, they arrested two thugs. One of the suspected thugs contacted his colleagues on phone and before we knew what was happening, there was firing everywhere such that the men of SARS even ran away."

"We also ran away only for us to discover that all the vehicles there, including Hilux vans belonging to SARS, had been vandalized. As we approached our homes, we discovered that our houses

were also being destroyed."

"The SARS assured us that they would go there to arrest the hoodlums but they did not go there. I had to use the men of the Nigerian Army, Onitsha to remove my car from the scene."

"The surprising thing is that those who were supposed to be arrested accused the SARS people of being thugs."

"On August 3, we petitioned the IGP and showed him all the destruction. Our tenants in the various estates whose houses were destroyed also petitioned the IGP. The mother of one of the tenants was killed during the attack."

"The IGP men came for arrest from Abuja and they mobilized more SARS men from Awkuzu. By the time they got to the scene, more destruction had taken place at the estate by suspected thugs loaded in two shuttle buses."

2023: It's our turn now, Nd S'West leaders

By Omeiza Ajayi

ABUJA—IGBO leaders have told their counterparts in the North and Southwest to stop arrogating to themselves the sole power to decide the fate of Nigeria, saying the Igbo have come of age and deserve a shot at the presidency in 2023.

They made the demand at a news conference weekend in Abuja under the auspices of Global Movement for Igbo President GLOMIP 2023 and the Ohanaeze Ndigbo UK & Northern Ireland.

Speaking at the event, a former governor of Anambra State, Chief Chukwuemeka Ezeife called for a restructuring of the federation. He added that the Igbo are already projecting some persons for the 2023 presidential contest.

He also dismissed concerns that the Igbo are republican in nature and may not be able to unite for a common cause, especially with regards to the 2023 presidency.

Ezeife said: "If you mention some names, they are not Igbo enough and are not acceptable at all to us because we

know they will sell out. So, we will bring somebody who will show love to all, show love to Hausa, Yoruba and to his Igbo brothers and to all Nigerians. It is too early to name names, but we are already projecting some people."

"If Nigeria is well organised, everybody will be happy and the Igbos will be the happiest because we want the largest market possible to trade in."

He recalled that there was a time when the World Bank declared that some parts of Nigeria were growing faster than the rest of the world. "Then what happened? There was a coup in 1966 and from then, we started to take giant steps backwards. We must know where our problems started."

"We need to go back to what used to work and instead of regions, we may use the current six geo-political zones. They can be adjusted but it must be based on fairness. Some people in the North believe that restructuring is about resource control or that when we restructure, they will lose oil money. This is not true. A good leader will national-

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