

NEWS HOTLINES: 08052867023, 08052867058

## 16 killed, 6 missing in Abia /A-Ibom boundary clash

By Ugochukwu Alaribe

**UMUAHIA**—Sixteen persons have been reportedly killed while 6 others are still missing following a boundary clash between the Usaka Ukwu, Azunchai, Ekpiri Ala-Ala, Ariam Elu Elu communities in Ikwuano council area of Abia State and their Nkari and Obot Akara neighbours in Ini and Obot Akara council areas of Akwa Ibom State.

Other communities in Abia State affected by the boundary clash including Oboni - Upa, Ndiorie, Obugwu and Ekwelu, lament that they now live in fear of their neighbors who always lay ambush and kill their people on their farm lands. They urged the government to save them from the incessant killings and destruction of their properties.

Addressing stakeholders of the affected communities including traditional rulers, town union presidents and the Chairman of Ikwuano council, Chief Steve Mpamugo, under the auspices of Ariam Usaka Professionals and Ariam Usaka Development Union; President General of Usaka Ukwu Development Union, Chief Boniface Mgbaramuko said that the recent clash started from May 2020 to January 22, 2021, when the Nkari people invaded farms belonging to the Usaka Ukwu community and murdered 16 people without provocation.

He alleged that on January 22, 2021, the Nkari people ambushed and killed one of the three soldiers who were alerted to the crisis and seized their rifles and vehicle.

In his words: "We have lost 16 people during the attack by the Nkari people; six are still missing. Five persons were killed at Ndiorie; they skinned one of them alive and danced round with his head. In 2017, they invaded Usaka Ukwu community. Now, they have cleared our farms; their strategy is to kill us when we visit our farm land. Famine looms in Ikwuano because we can no

longer farm. The latest clash started in May 2020 to January 22, 2021. On May 20, Usaka Ukwu indigenes went to their farm at Igmeta and were attacked by armed indigenes of Ibono Okporo Nkari.

They killed one Peter Uwaecheji Ugorji and shot 5 other persons. Ugorji's corpse was recovered and still kept at the morgue. The Chairman of Ini LGA apologized for the killing of Ugorji and promised that the perpetrator will be fished out while the local government will assist in the burial. When the one of January 22, 2021 crisis started, the Usaka Ukwu people alerted the Army to intervene but when the Army came, the Nkari people ambushed them and killed one of the soldiers.

The unbelievable happened when Usaka Ukwu indigenes namely Iroegbulam Isaac, Boniface Ugwunna and Iheanacho Orioha went to their ancestral farm land at a place called Oji and Ala-Oku, and some people from Ibono Okporo Nkari apprehended and beheaded them and their corpses taken to Nkari community. The issue of unprovoked attack and the calculated moves to grab our lands across the land border of Ikwuano LGA (Usaka Ukwu, Ndiorie, Ariam Elu Elu, Ekpiri Ala Ala, Obugwu, Ekwelu and Azunchai) by the people of Ini and Obot Akara LGAs has now intensified to the point where they want to push us out of the land of our ancestors.

"The most annoying aspect of this greedy expansionist agenda of the Akwa Ibomites is the criminal reference and surveying of the Nigerian Army camp sited at the farm lands of Obugwu in Ikwuano LGA. These community lands of Obugwu, which extends from Ekwelu Ariam Elu Elu to and across the Umuahia- Ikot Ekpene road to Utu in Akwa Ibom was a subject of litigation in the 1950s and which appeal was won by our brothers from Obugwu.