

Afikpo: Transfer case of killers of policeman in Ebonyi community to Force Hqtrs —Clan

•Allegation is funny, preposterous —Ebonyi Govt

By Peter Okutu

ABAKALI—THE Edda clan under the auspices of Edda Identity, in Afikpo South Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, has called on the Inspector-General of Police, Usman Baba; the Amnesty International; the Federal Ministry of Interior; the Federal Ministry of Defence; among others to immediately transfer the case files of killers of a police inspector, Insp. Festus Akpan, two youths, and a seven-month-old pregnant woman, to Force Headquarters Abuja, for proper investigation and trial.

This was as the group alleged that the Commissioner for Justice and Attorney-General of the state, Barr. Cletus Ofoke, has allegedly moved the case file of the suspects in custody of the police and court, in a bid to set the killers free, without the involvement of a Court of competent jurisdiction.

The Convener of Edda Identity, a socio-cultural organization in Afikpo South Council area, Julius Oji (aka Ochiri Edda) stated this in a statement, on Wednesday.

According to him, "There is a grand plot and arrangement by the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice in Ebonyi State, acting on the

Government, to move the case file of these suspects and killers, from the police and court authorities in the state, in a bid to release the suspects, without trial.

"We, the people of Edda reject this move and we call on the Inspector-General of Police; Amnesty International; the National Security Adviser, and the Ministry of Interior to intervene.

"We, the people of Edda frown at the unpopular and unacceptable move by the Ebonyi State Government, to release these suspects from police custody without trial and proper arraignment in a competent court of law.

"Their idea is to release these criminals before the elections, for them to continue their killing spree and we, the people of Edda reject this move, because it's against our peace and collective existence, as a people. And we therefore, demand the transfer of this matter and the case of these suspects to Force Headquarters/Abuja, for proper trial and adjudication."

Consequently, Governor Umahi has set up a Panel of Inquiry to among other things, find out the remote and immediate causes of the crisis.

Reacting to the allegation, the Special Assistant to Governor

David Umahi on Media and Strategy, Mr. Chooks Oko said: "This is as funny as it is preposterous. Police already told the whole world how the proceedings are faring. What more do they want? I cannot answer the police, so you should ask them. Using who for election?

"Sounds stupid really. How can a working government, acknowledged as the best in the

country be hoping to use people charged with a crime to campaign? Ebonyi APC is rock solid on the ground. We don't need cheap labour to win an election. Our works have already won for us."

In his reaction, the Commissioner for Justice and Attorney General, Barr. Cletus Ofoke explained that he was not aware of any directive by Ebonyi State Government for criminals to be freed.

"Criminals will face the full weight of the law. Ebonyi State Government will never give such a directive."

Soludo returns sacked Ochiogu-led Ogbaru market exco to seat

By Nwabueze Okonkwo

ONITSHA—WILD jubulations rent the air yesterday at Ogbaru main market, one of the biggest markets within the Onitsha metropolis as the former elected President of the market, Chief Ndubuisi Ochiogu, and his executive took over the mantle of leadership of the market once again, having been recently appointed by Governor Chukwuma Soludo.

The 1,000-seater market hall located inside the market was filled as traders, stakeholders and members of the Board of Trustees, BoT, of the market thronged the hall to catch a

glimpse of the handover ceremony from the outgoing Ogbogu Nwanodi-led caretaker committee of the market to the Ochiogu-led incoming executive.

A moment later, Chief Nwanodi handed over a Bible to Ochiogu to symbolize a formal handover of the baton.

Among the stakeholders at the brief handover ceremony was the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the market, Sam Mendy; another major stakeholder; Chief Joseph Ukaeji (Ejison), the traditional Prime Minister of Oraukwu; Onowu Patrick Oyeduba and past chairmen of the market, Chief Jeriaj Nwokoye, among others.

Speaking at the ceremony, Chief Mendu and Ukaeji

political misadventure, and consequently urged Nigerians to discountenance his rantings.

The State Commissioner for Information, Declan Emelumba in a statement in Owerri yesterday, said Ugochinyere shot himself on the foot because "he failed all through the over one hour of his rambling to either acknowledge the brutal murder and butchering of his own local government sole

administrator or to commiserate with his family, or even to include him among those he observed one minute silence for".

The statement explained: "Ideato North where the late Sole Administrator came from, is one of the two local governments that Ugochinyere is seeking to represent

commended Soludo for heeding the clarion call by the traders to return Ochiogu and his executive to the seat, adding that they are now convinced that Soludo has a listening ear.

Responding, Ochiogu commended them for their show of solidarity and pledged to rehabilitate all the moribund infrastructures in the market such as electricity and water borehole as soon as possible.

Ochiogu and his executive had been elected by the traders in January 2022 during former Governor Willie Obiano's administration but sometime in May same year, Soludo's administration dissolved the executive and appointed a caretaker committee to take over from him.

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