

Ebubeagu causes panic in Imo

- Ebubeagu operations not official —Govt
- Igbo group wants Ebubeagu members prosecuted in Imo
- Says children, women mostly affected
- As Reps mandate Army chief, IGP to probe killings of Mbaise indigenes in Imo by suspected security agents

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OWERRI—CONFUSION, panic have trailed the existence and operation of Ebubeagu security outfit in Imo State, in some communities in the state.

Vanguard gathered on Monday from some communities that the acclaimed security outfit of the Ebubeagu operation has forced villagers to abandon their homes.

It was alleged that their operation has led to some tragic stories in the state one of which was the reported killing of a 22-year-old boy, Chigozie Igbo from Umuoke, Atta in Njaba Local Government Area of Imo State.

Also, the most recent panic happened on Monday when an alarm was raised around Awonmanma in Oru East Local Government in the state that the Ebubeagu officials were on their way to the Awonmanma market to allegedly cause havoc.

This alarm caused great confusion, and many traders ran away and hurriedly shut down their shops.

It was gathered that for now, some of the communities that were badly affected by the so-called *Ebubeagu*, have lived under fear since the beginning of this year.

Some of the affected communities include Awonmama, Akatta, in Oru East Local Government Area; Umuoke, Atta, in Njaba Local Government Area; and Umutanze, Ihioma, Okporo in Orlu Local Government Area.

Also in Orsu local government area, we have Orsuihitteukwa and Amannachi among others.

When the State Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Declan Emelumba, was called to find out if Ebubeagu was in existence in the state, he said: "The Ebubeagu has not been launched officially but they are in operation."

Reacting to the development, an Igbo group, Coalition of South East Youth Leaders, COSEYL, yesterday, called for the prosecution of members of the Ebubeagu outfit in the state over their activities which have led to

alleged extra-judicial killings in Imo communities.

COSEYL President, Goodluck Ibem, made this statement in Owerri, about the level of killings in the state linked to Ebubeagu.

The group was angry that nobody has the right to take the life of another person, adding that the time has come to apply the law.

According to COSEYL, "The Coalition of South East Youth Leaders, COSEYL, the umbrella body of all the youth groups in the South-East geo-political zone condemns in strongest terms, the extrajudicial killings of Igbo youths by operatives of Ebubeagu security operatives in Umutanze, Orsu, Nnembi and Atta communities in Orlu zone of Imo State. This is wicked, barbaric and we condemn such a despicable act by the operatives involved.

"We are not in the stone age where anyone or persons will wake up one morning and accuse someone of being a criminal and kill the said person. We are in the 21st century where we have a rule of law and the constitution guarding the people and government activities as regards governance. For Ebubeagu security operatives to wake up and start killing Igbo youths in whatever guise is unacceptable.

"Most of the houses in the affected communities have been burnt down and destroyed while the few persons who escaped being killed have ran away leaving those communities empty without anyone or animal sited anywhere. Those towns are now ghost communities without any living thing.

"One of the disturbing incidences in the community was a situation where a woman received machete cuts in her head, hand and other parts of her body because of her inability to provide her husband or tell the Ebubeagu operatives where her husband went to. This is unbefitting of a sane society. Ndi-Imo and Ndi-Igbo must rise and condemn in its entirety this despicable act by these so-called Ebubeagu security operatives."

The Igbo group warned that "No one has the constitutional rights or powers to take the life of

another man at will. If anyone is arrested on suspicion of being a criminal, he or she should be taken to court for the court to try such persons involved. It is unlawful and a criminal act to torture, maim or kill anyone on the premise of being a criminal.

"We warn those Ebubeagu security operatives to stop forthwith, the extrajudicial killings now and we demand that those found wanting or culpable of extrajudicial killings in Imo State should be made to face the music," Igbo group said.

Reps mandate Army chief, IGP to probe killings of Mbaise indigenes

Meantime, the House of Representatives, yesterday, urged the Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Farouk Yahaya and the Inspector General of Police, IGP, Usman Baba Alkali to thoroughly investigate the invasion of five communities in Ahiazu LGA of Imo State where some indigenes were killed by suspected security agents.

The House said the invasion and killings commenced in the early hours of Saturday, February 12, 2022.

The five communities included Ihiteafoukwu, Umu Okirika, Oparanadim, Mpam, and Ogbor Umeze in Ahiazu Mbaise/Ezinihitte Federal Constituency of the State.

The House charged Yahaya and Alkali to unravel the perpetrators of the act; the reason for the invasion; number of lives and properties destroyed, their offenses, and why communities that were not at war must be razed without recourse to the excruciating effect of rendering the innocent homeless as well as depriving the living their breadwinners.

The resolutions came on the heels of a motion under matters of urgent public importance titled "Urgent Need to Probe the Invasion, Siege, Unlawful Arrest and Wanton Destruction of Lives and Properties in Five Communities of Ahiazu LGA of Imo State, by Men Suspected to be Law Enforcement Agents",

presented by Hon. Emeka Chinedu (PDP, Imo State).

In his motion, Chinedu noted that Ihiteafoukwu, Umu Okirika, Oparanadim, Mpam, and Ogbor Umeze in Ahiazu LGA, have been peaceful and quiet communities in Ahiazu Mbaise/Ezinihitte Federal Constituency, whose citizens were known for agrarian values and industriousness.

He expressed concern with the alleged invasion, siege, unlawful arrest and wanton destruction of lives and properties belonging to indigenes of the five communities.

The lawmaker remarked that the primary responsibility of the law enforcement agencies was to maintain law and order and not to wantonly destroy lives and properties or other actions that were inimical to fundamental human rights.

"Such gestapo invasion, siege and wanton destruction of lives and properties after sporadic shootings is expanding in scope and frequency in the country especially in Imo State, South East of Nigeria.

"Nigerians are increasingly losing hope and confidence in the nation's law enforcers due to high-handedness, unethical conducts and total disregard for rule of law and engagements.

"The fight against unlawful activities or any form of criminality, but must be anchored on rule of law as enshrined in the 1999 constitution as amended, especially when human lives and properties are involved

"The danger inherent in one-sided narrative as often packaged by law enforcement agents in such circumstances without thorough investigation is not only unhealthy for democracy, but also an intolerable affront to fundamental human rights, especially where law enforcement agents can recklessly invade, attack, destroy and maim before coming up with some frame-up to rationalize extra judicial activities.

"Further delay in investigating matters of this nature may not only send complicating signals, but also be counter-productive at the long run, especially as law enforcement agents, just like their counterparts around the world, do not have the inalienable right to act lawlessly, waste lives or plunder properties of the people they are paid to protect", the lawmaker said.

Adopting the motion, the House mandated its committee on Police Affairs and the committee on Army to ensure compliance to the resolution.