

DON'T MISS, NEWS

10 dead, scores missing, houses razed as soldiers, youths clash

November 9, 2022



- Only shrines were destroyed —Army
- IDP camps spring up in Ohafia as Army invades more communities

- Gunmen attack police checkpoint in Anambra
- Police detain soldier for stabbing creditor to death in Umuahia

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UMUAHIA—Barely 24 hours after soldiers and youths clashed in Izombe, Oguta Local Government Area of Imo State which left many dead, no fewer than 10 persons have again, been reported killed and many houses burnt as soldiers from 14 Brigade, Nigeria Army, invaded Amangwu community in Ohafia Local Government Area of Abia State in search of their missing colleague.

Consequently, over 1,000 residents of communities in Ohafia clan are now living in Internally Displaced Persons, IDP, camps, following continued attack by soldiers.

Also yesterday, gunmen allegedly attacked a popular police checkpoint located along the Onitsha-Owerri road in Ihiala, Anambra State.

Similarly, a soldier, identified as Saeed Sabo, of the 82 Division, Nigerian Army, Enugu, is now cooling off in police cell for allegedly stabbing a middle-aged man to death in Umuahia.

10 killed, scores missing

Following the military raid of Amangwu community, scores of locals were also reportedly arrested and are yet to be sighted.

The community has been reportedly deserted as locals fled to different locations, abandoning their homes just to stay out of trouble.

Vanguard gathered that the invasion was in the aftermath of an alleged abduction of a yet-to-be-identified soldier, said to be "on pass in the area".

The soldier, according to reports, was said to be on leave, and visited his village in nearby Ikwun in Cross Rivers State but got missing at the border between Amuma Ohafia and Amangwu.

It was learned that troops from 14 Brigade were deployed for a rescue operation on the missing soldier.

The soldiers allegedly burnt over 50 houses in the community, while 10 persons were killed, with many others missing.

Sources told Vanguard that the soldiers had also invaded Okon and Amuma with heavy shooting and broke into houses to arrest some youths.

His words: “The problem was with our neighbouring community, Amangwu, but the Army invaded Okon yesterday and burnt 5 houses. They were shooting everywhere. Some of them were using drones to take pictures of the community.

”They returned by 2 am today (yesterday) and burnt another house. They broke into houses and dragged youths into their vehicles. Any youth arrested is tagged a member of IPOB.

”The youths arrested are yet to be seen since their arrest. People are fleeing their homes to the IDP camps. We are now IDPs in our place. We are afraid they may storm the IDP camp in search of youths.”

A resident of Amangwu who spoke on the condition of anonymity, alleged that the number of youths killed in the community was above 20, contrary to the 10 reported by the media.

He said: “What soldiers are doing in Amangwu community amounts to ethnic cleansing. If any youth has committed an offence, the soldiers should arrest him, not burn houses and kill people.

”Everybody arrested is tagged a member of IPOB. Many youths have been killed. Even families who fled Amangwu have been searching for their loved ones. Those whose houses were burnt couldn’t save anything because the soldiers came in the early morning when the residents were still sleeping.

”Some people were lucky to escape through the bush path because the Army blocked the area searching for people. Amangwu is now a ghost town.”

Efforts to contact the Army Public Relations Officer, 14 Brigade, Ohafia, Lt. Innocent Omale, were unsuccessful as he did not respond to calls and a text message was sent to his mobile number unreplied.

However, a top military source in the Brigade told Vanguard that soldiers were currently on operation in Ohafia, fighting the rising insecurity in the area, but denied burning houses and killing innocent people.

The source, who pleaded not to be quoted, confirmed that there was a military operation in the community in search of the missing soldier, and against criminal elements who had allegedly taken over the area.

The source denied the killing of locals and destruction of houses, explaining that only shrines used by criminals were destroyed.

Said the source: “There is an ongoing operation in search of a missing soldier in Amangwu general area. Only shrines belonging to the criminals in the enclaves were affected.

”The Nigerian Army is a professional Army that respects law-abiding citizens and fishes out those with criminal intent disrupting the peace-loving people of Ohafia and its environs.

“We must fish out the criminals in our immediate society for peace to reign.”

On the justification for the alleged invasion, the source said: “But the criminals being executed in the criminal enclaves are irrelevant. Human skulls in different shrines? Mini Barracks in the bushes by these criminals? Missing innocent souls is (sic) of no concern? The Nigerian Army must fish out criminals in our society.”

IDP camps spring up in Ohafia

The IDPs, comprising women and children, are now quartered in primary schools, community halls, and churches in some communities yet to be attacked by the soldiers.

Some IDPs who spoke to Vanguard, stated that they escaped with nothing as the soldiers burnt their houses, adding that They lacked clothing, food, and medicine .

They urged the federal and state governments to call the soldiers to order.

Gunmen attack police checkpoint in Anambra

In a similar development, gunmen yesterday attacked a police checkpoint in Anambra State.

The attackers, who allegedly came from the neighbouring Mgbidi Local Government Area of Imo State, opened fire on the policemen on duty, who took to their heels.

Amid the confusion, passengers traveling to Owerri from Onitsha and Onitsha to Imo State had to make u-turn.

The development caused traffic gridlock in the area as the travellers parked their vehicles at nearby Nkwo Ogbe market, Ihiala, and at the Mgbidi end in Imo State.

Workers at Anambra-owned Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University who were on their way to the office, had to abandon work for the day and fled home.

Residents of the area also fled into a nearby bush for safety, while authorities of the nearby Abbott Boys Secondary School, Ihiala, directed students to immediastely leave the school premises.

The state Police Public Relation Officer, PPRO, Mr. Tochukwu Ikenga, could not speak on the matter, but a police source confirmed the attack.

The source could, however, not confirm if there were casualties, although he said that the state police command had dispatched a special squad to Ihiala to quell the situation.

Police detain soldier for stabbing creditor to death

In a related development, te Police in Abia have detained a soldier for stabbing a man to death.

The victim, Uchenna Offor, 34, from Olokoro in Umuahia South, was said to have demanded that the soldier paid for goods bought previously on credit before another one would be sold to him.

An eyewitness said: “The soldier attached to a Chinese construction firm came to buy something on credit around Umuahia Railway station but the victim demanded payment for goods bought previously on credit.

”In the ensuing altercation, the suspect was said to have used the bayonet of his gun on the victim, stabbing him in the chest.”

The eye witness said the victim who slumped after he was stabbed, was immediately rushed to the Federal Medical Centre, Umuahia, where he was certified dead on arrival.

Police Public Relations Officer, PPRO, in charge of Abia State command, Geoffrey Ogbonna, a Superintendent of Police, confirmed the incident.

He said investigations into the matter had commenced, assuring that justice would be served.

Dismantle Mgbidi army checkpoint, CSO tells CDS, CoAS, Imo govt

However, a civil society organisation, Security Situation Room, has drawn the attention of the Chief of Defence Staff, Chief of Army Staff and Imo State government to the army checkpoint of ‘extortion and oppression’ at Mgbidi, by St Joseph’s Catholic Church/Ray Jacobs Boarding School, Imo State.

Convener, Security Situation Room, Douglas Ogbankwa, in a statement in Abuja, yesterday, said: “We, through our observers noticed with dismay the long, unconscionable and reprehensible gridlock, artificially spurned by extortionist army personnel, who force commuters to cross to the other side, with the attendant danger of fast moving vehicles on the ever busy Owerri- Onitsha Express Way, a clear case of ethnic profiling, as prohibited by Section 42 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (As Amended), as majority of those that ply that road are of Igbo extraction.

“But in the hot bed of insurgency and banditry in the North, the Nigerian Army does not deploy such selective and targeted method used to humiliate people without any reason whatsoever. They collect money from those buses who do not disembark and keep all in a callously created gridlock, of which the only goal is to extort the poor commuters, who are mostly those perceived as the poor and the weak, while those in air conditioned private vehicles are given fast passes.

“There is no search conducted. Even at that, they need a warrant on each commuter in their name to conduct a search according to the law. The Security Situation Room condemns the actions of these brigades, masquerading as Army officials and we restate that there is freedom of liberty and freedom of movement as enshrined in Chapter 4 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (As Amended), as the actions of these brigades are a flagrant infringement of the Fundamental Human Rights of the citizens who ply the road”.

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