

## One killed as Enugu community land dispute escalates



**By Chinedu Adonu**

**Tension has erupted again in Enugu State following a renewed outbreak of violence in a protracted land dispute between Etiti Ngwo Community in Udi Local Government Area and Umu-Ugwu Akum Akwuke in Enugu South Local Government Area.**

**The latest clash claimed the life of a young man, despite existing court judgments affirming ownership of the disputed land in favour of Etiti Ngwo.**

**Residents of Etiti Ngwo have accused their neighbours of defying multiple court decisions, including judgments from the Appeal Court and Supreme Court, by encroaching on the land and launching violent attacks.**

**Chairman of Etiti Ngwo Central Community, Eze Daniel Onyejuwaka, told journalists on Monday that the crisis escalated shortly after a meeting with the Deputy Governor of Enugu State and the State Boundary Committee on July 10, 2025.**

**“What actually happened is that on Thursday, July 10, 2025, we went to the office of the Deputy Governor, who is the head of the Boundary Committee of Enugu State, and had a judgment over the dispute we have with the people of Umuku-Apuke in the Enugu South Local Government,” Onyejuwaka explained.**

**“The Appeal Court gave us judgment, and the Supreme Court also upheld it. They later protested through their legal counsel to the Boundary Committee that we were trespassing.**

**“The state government intervened, and that same day we were given judgment. Surprisingly, from that particular day, they went to the scene and started demolishing all the properties we had there. They laid ambush and killed Sochima in cold blood.”**

**According to Onyejuwaka, the attack occurred while some community members were returning from the site. He said the assailants, alleged to be from Umu-Ugwu Akum Akwuke, launched an armed ambush.**

**“As the last batch of our people were coming back from the site, the people of Umuguakom and their team laid ambush and started shooting. Eventually, they shot one of our brothers, Sochima Onoh, who died in cold blood.”**

**He also accused the Managing Director of the Enugu State Geographic Information System (ENGIS), Chiwetalu Nwatu, of exacerbating the situation by allegedly making land allocations in defiance to court rulings.**

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“Despite all the activities of the Deputy Governor to resolve this issue, he went ahead and started reallocating the land or admitting people of Umu-Ugwu Akum Akwuke, who had already been defeated in court, giving double allocations and things like that. This is where they got the momentum to start attacking us. We have lost three lives on this land.”

“We are only using this medium to call on the state government, particularly the Governor of Enugu State, the Attorney-General of the state, the Attorney-General of the Federation, and all the judges and lawyers in this country to come to our aid so that the judgment given to us by both the Appeal Court and the Supreme Court can be honoured.”

“This is the third person we are losing in this same land. We have lost the likes of Oliver Onoh, today again it’s Sochima, and particularly my own father died in the same process. It is so pathetic.”

Onyejuwaka said the Supreme Court had ruled in their favour as far back as 2015, with all subsequent appeals and applications for stay of execution filed by the opposing community struck out as recently as 2021.

“In three occasions that they filed to the Supreme Court, all of them were struck down. When they had judgment, we never stepped into that land. When they had judgment of the High Court, we left there and allowed them to do whatever they wanted until we got up here. I just don’t know why they are doing all this to us.

“If you look around me, it’s not as if I don’t have people. But we are law-abiding. That is why we are appealing to the Governor of Enugu State to make sure he ends this matter before it turns again into a communal crisis.”

An eyewitness to the killing, Obinna Onyia, tearfully recalled the moment Sochima Onoh was shot.

“We were on our way back and saw some people all wearing black. They started pursuing us and we were running without direction. The land was slippery because it had rained. My friend fell down, and I told him to stand up.

“He stood up and we continued running. He fell again and went into the bush to hide. They came and met him inside the bush and shot him. I saw them, but I couldn’t do anything.”

Reacting to the allegations, the Chief Executive Officer of ENGIS, Chiwetalu Nwatu, denied any wrongdoing, stating that his agency was acting within its legal authority.

“The land in question is a Crown Land and as such belongs to the government. Rather than taking over the land and demolishing every property there, the

rather than taking over the land and demolishing every property there, the administration of Governor Peter Mbah in its magnanimity is asking everyone with a property there to come forward for registration.”

Meanwhile, the Enugu State Police Command has confirmed the killing. Police spokesperson, SP Daniel Ndukwe, said the incident was reported on July 12, 2025.

“On July 12, 2025, at about 3:35 pm, the Police received a distress report from Isiama Agu-Ovolo in Etiti Ngwo community, alleging that youths from Umu-Ugwu Akum Akwuke stormed their area at Ovolo Layout and shot one Onoh Sochima. “Police operatives responded immediately and found the victim’s lifeless body with suspected gunshot wounds. He was taken to the hospital, confirmed dead, and his body deposited in the mortuary for preservation and autopsy.”

SP Ndukwe said preliminary investigations link the killing to the ongoing land dispute and appealed for calm.

“We urge both communities to remain calm and avoid acts of self-help while a full investigation is ongoing.”