

Suspected armed herders invade Imo village, kill vigilante leader, others missing



By Chidi Nkwopara

OWERRI—Tension has gripped Amakohia-Ubi community in Owerri West Local Government Area of Imo State following a deadly attack by suspected armed Fulani herders, which left one vigilante leader dead while others remain missing or wounded.

The incident, which occurred on Wednesday evening around 6:30 pm, sparked panic and a mass exodus of residents who fled to neighbouring communities for safety.

A villager, who identified himself simply as Mr Paul, told Vanguard that the slain vigilante leader, identified as Monday Nwaozuzu, alias Ojo Ola, was gunned down during the confrontation.

“The dead, wounded, and missing persons are all members of our community vigilante group. Monday Nwaozuzu was killed by the herdsmen, while others are still missing or wounded. At least three members of the vigilante were caught up in the clash,” Paul said.

Another resident, who spoke on condition of anonymity, explained that the trouble started when vigilante members tried to prevent herders and their cattle from entering farmlands around the community college axis.

“It is routine for our vigilantes to guard our farms. Yesterday, they encountered the herders and asked them to turn back, but they refused. Unknown to our men, the herders were fully armed. Suddenly, they opened fire, killing Monday and injuring another. Since then, we have been combing the bushes, searching for those missing,” the source recounted.

The villager added that suspicion of abduction heightened when one of the vigilantes’ phone number was dialed on Thursday morning, only for a suspected herder to answer the call. “For now, no one can say whether our brothers are dead or just abducted. This is not the first time our community has suffered such attacks in recent months,” he lamented.

As at press time, the spokesperson of the Imo State Police Command, Henry Okoye, had not responded to inquiries on the attack. However, villagers confirmed that security operatives had visited the area for an on-the-spot assessment, while the body of the deceased vigilante leader had been deposited in a morgue.

The community remains on edge as residents continue to flee, fearing further attacks from the rampaging herders.