

NEWS

Edo government about to declare war on Ijaw nation – IYC

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The Ijaw Youth Council, IYC, and Ijaw elders in Edo State, weekend, raised an alarm over alleged plan by the state government to deploy soldiers to Gelegele and other Ijaw communities in the state, including Okikoro where they have their Egbesu shrine.

They warned that such action would be a declaration of war against the Ijaw nation and would be resisted.

National President of IYC, Eric Omare, who made this claim during a press conference in Okomu, Ovia South West Local Government Area of Edo State, stressed that the Ijaw were not settlers in Edo State.

“Ijaw people are indigenes and owners of the land that they occupy in Edo State. Let me also make this point, any threat or attack on Ijaw people in Edo State, is an attack against the entire Ijaw people in Nigeria.

“Only this afternoon we got a message that the government of Edo State, in collaboration with the Benin Traditional Council, has perfected plans to send soldiers to Ijaw communities starting from Gelegele and the Egbesu shrine in Okikoro. We want to advice, if they do that it will be a declaration of war against the Ijaw nation, they should not take the Ijaw nation’s silence for weakness. The Ijaw nation has the capacity to defend her people anywhere in Nigeria,” Omare alleged.

Reacting to the Supreme Court judgement which the Benin people said gave them the right to the land, Omare added, “I have read the judgement they are referring to between two individuals in Gelegele and Ughoton, that judgement has nothing to do with the entirety of the land owned by the Ijaw people of Edo state. You cannot use a

land dispute between two individuals from two communities to rope the entire nation, it is ridiculous. So that judgement has no relevance to the issues at stake. We want to warn the government of Edo state to behave like a government and not an extension of the palace”.

However, the state government, through the Special Adviser to the Governor on Communication, Mr Cusoe Osagie, said there were no such plans yet, adding, however, that the state government would ensure that lives and property of indigenes of the state living in those areas were protected in the event of any threat to peace in the area.

“I am not aware of any deployment of soldiers to that area. However, the state government reserves the right to protect all law abiding citizens in the state. No breach of peace has been reported yet, but if and when that is done, the state will ensure that lives and properties are protected. If the IYC are law abiding people in the state then they have nothing to fear about,” he said.