

DSS arrests two alleged killers of abducted C'River don

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Operatives of the Department of State Services have arrested two suspected kidnappers linked to the 2023 abduction and killing of a professor of neurology, Ekanem Philip-Ephraim, in Cross River State.

Philip-Ephraim was abducted on July 13, 2023, from her office in Calabar, Cross River State, and was later confirmed killed by her captors.

According to the then Chairman of the Nigerian Medical Association in Cross River State, Dr Felix Archibong, the kidnappers disguised as patients and, while the professor was attending to them, brandished weapons and whisked her away at about 7:15 pm.

Her abduction prompted the state chapter of the NMA to withdraw medical services in protest, demanding her immediate rescue.

Officials of the DSS, who spoke on condition of anonymity on Monday, said the suspects—identified as the alleged gang leader, Patrick Essien Etim, 23, and Bassey Antiha Asuquo, 40—were arrested on December 27 at a medical facility in the state while allegedly planning to kidnap another senior medical practitioner.

One of the officials said the DSS had been tracking the gang since July 2023, when Philip-Ephraim was abducted by armed men posing as patients at her private clinic on Atimbo Road in Calabar.

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“Our operatives, on December 27, arrested the leader of the gang and another suspect who kidnapped and murdered a prominent professor of neurology, Ekanem Philip-Ephraim, in 2023. The gang leader, Patrick Essien Etim, 23, and his accomplice, Bassey Antiha Asuquo, 40, were apprehended at a medical facility in Cross River State,” the source said.

The source added that the duo confessed to the crime, admitting that they killed the professor after collecting multiple ransom payments from her family.

“It has been two years of torment for her loved ones, not knowing what happened to the professor. With this arrest, her family and loved ones will finally have some peace and the closure they deserve,” the official said.

The source further disclosed that the suspects also confessed to kidnapping other victims and vandalising electricity cables. Another suspect, identified as Isaac Ekpeyong, was also arrested by DSS operatives in connection with the case.

According to the source, the arrests reflect the DSS' sustained efforts to dismantle criminal networks and enhance public safety.

“This breakthrough underscores the commitment of the DSS to restoring public safety across the country through intelligence-driven and covert operations,” the source added.