

UBEJI, an Itsekiri community in Warri South Local Government Area, Delta State, is known for its boisterous activities. It connects Ife Kporo, home to several oil tank farms, Egbofodo, and other busy corridors.

Findings revealed that police operatives make regular visits to Ubeji. But on March 31, a routine operation went tragically wrong in a bustling part of the community nicknamed Hausa Quarters.

A man, Mr. Joshua Amadi, was allegedly killed by policemen, this time not with firearms.

How it happened

Community sources said a police patrol vehicle conveying personnel stormed the area in the morning hours of that day to make some arrests.

It was not clear if they had any specific suspect in mind.

Youths who saw the vehicle before the policemen alighted reportedly scampered in different directions to escape arrest.

A resident of the community who identified himself simply as Tosan said: "In the last few weeks, policemen have been making arrests in the state. Anyone caught, you know what follows. To avoid spending unbudgeted expenses, many people ran on sighting the policemen."

Vanguard gathered that 37-year-old Amadi also fled towards a nearby river and jumped into it.

There were however different accounts as to how Amadi died. A ver-

sion of the account by neighbourhood folks, who did not want their names in print for fear of being harassed, alleged that the policemen went after Amadi and, when they got to the river shore, they allegedly started hurling stones and other hard objects at him.

They said one of the hard objects allegedly struck Amadi's head in the water, and he bled to death right there.

Another version of the account, however, claimed that Amadi was not a good swimmer and drowned.

'My brother was stoned to death'

But late Amadi's younger brother, Victor, countered this claim, revealing that when the corpse was recovered about five hours later, they observed a crack on his head.

According to Victor: "My brother was stoned to death. The blood on the head and ears confirmed that he bled from the injuries he sustained."

Deeply saddened by the passage of his brother, Victor wondered why the policemen still went after him even when he had jumped into the water.

"He was not with a gun or any lethal weapon. My brother only ran like others because when the police arrest you, they squeeze so much money from anyone arrested whether you are innocent or not. "My brother was not married and was yet to have a child. He was a gentleman. The police-

ROUTINE RAID TURNS FATAL

Did policemen kill fleeing youth or he drowned?

- **Family reveals crack on head; insists policemen stoned him to death inside river**
- **We have no record of such incident — Police**
- **How did a fleeing noodles seller meet his death in police dragnet?**

By Jimitota Onoyume, Assistant News Editor

men came that morning, killing my brother," Victor said, biting his lips, an indication of deep pain.

He further recalled that they lost their mother four years ago. "This year will make it four years since I lost my mother, now my brother is gone just like that. He was a friend of all. He was just murdered by greedy policemen. I was told he ran like others did because they were afraid of being arrested and extorted by the policemen," he muttered in pain.

Protest in Ubeji

Amadi's death triggered a protest by angry youths in the area. The mob marched round the town with his remains draped in a wrapper. They got to the police post in the community, where they wreaked havoc on some parts of the building.

Rights activist speaks

A rights activist, Mr. Ojumude Bishop, who resides in Warri, enjoined the police to conduct their operations with professionalism.

He said: "The continuous unprofessional

conduct of some security personnel within Delta State reportedly led to the death of Amadi at Ubeji community.

"Yes, we all support the fight against crime and social vices. Such efforts must be carried out within the bounds of professionalism, respect for human rights, and established rules of engagement. The recurring reports of excessive force and misconduct undermine public trust and defeat the very purpose of law enforcement."

Police response

Curiously, there was no official statement on the matter from the command.

When Vanguard contacted the spokesman for the Delta State Police Command, Superintendent of Police, SP Bright Edeke, he said: "We didn't record any incident like that."

A pattern of controversy

This incident came



● Late Joshua Amadi



● Victor Amadi, younger brother of the deceased



● Delta state Police Commissioner, CP Yemi Oyerunyi

barely a few days after similar operations by the police across Warri, Effurun and Ughelli sparked angry reactions, with relatives of some of those arrested claiming they were innocent.

According to the state Police Public Relations Officer, about 270 suspects were whisked away from dark spots in these locations.

But another human rights activist, Mr. Israel Joe, came hard on the police after the operation, insisting that several of those arrested were innocent. He alleged that an innocent man even died from the operation.

A few months ago, an-

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other police operation was dubbed controversial when a young man, Mr. Liberty Kunu, who was in police custody, lost his life under questionable circumstances in Sapele. Vanguard gathered that arrests were made over the issue to unravel the extent of alleged cover-up by some policemen.

Residents call out police

Residents who spoke to Vanguard in Warri said they were not opposed to police operations and raids of dark spots in search of criminal elements, but the action, according to them, should not be used to fleece innocent persons of hard-earned money.

One of the residents identified simply as Ujumude said: "It is imperative to state clearly that the persistent recklessness of security operatives in this area must be urgently and deliberately addressed. The fight against drugs, cultism, and other criminal activities is necessary, but it must not come at the cost of innocent lives or community stability."

"Obviously we are not saying police should not clear the town of unwanted elements. We are safe when they are taken off the streets. But bad elements in the police should not, in the name of such operations, pick innocent youths struggling legitimately to survive. Police should not extort money from innocent youths. Some of the youths said sometimes the bad elements in the police force the families of these innocent boys arrested to pay as much as four hundred to five hundred thousand naira for their release," another resident on Jakpa Road, who did not want his name in print, said.