

Police kill man at friend's dad's funeral

•It is lie!—Police

STEVE OKO, Umuahia

FURRY, anxiety, confusion and pandemonium rent over the air weekend at Okigwe, Imo State when a trigger-crazy policeman allegedly killed a middle-aged man. The police officer was suspected to have drunk to stupor during the wake keep of an old man (names withheld) who died in the area.

According to an eye witness, the tragic incident occurred about 2 a.m. at the peak of the ceremony, when the Police Officer drafted to the scene along with his colleagues to ensure adequate security apparently began to shoot sporadically into the air and not satisfied with that, he decided to shoot at a mango tree at the deceased's compound.

Following the barbaric behaviour of the drunken police officer the mammoth crowd scampered for safety while others out of excitement stayed back, but the victim who ironically was said to be among the fleeing mourners was very unlucky as he was hit by a bullet that shattered his lower abdomen.

The victim, Mr. Uchechukwu Ezeigbo, 33, who hailed from Ihube Community was later rushed to a nearby St. Mary's Hospital Okigwe, where he was merely certified dead following a heavy bleeding even as all the Police Officers at the wake immediately disappeared from the scene while the sympathisers and mourners, including the popular comedian, Chika Okpara alias Zebrudaya took to their heels.

In an interview, Dr. Abah Anthony of St. Mary's Hospital who attended to the victim confirmed to *Daily Champion*

that the victim died as a result of heavy blood loss following "a close range gun shot injury at the left leg and also the right leg passing through the scrotum".

Continuing, Abah said, "We tried to stop the hemorrhage but he died of blood loss", and expressed shock that such act of irresponsibility could come from a police officer.

He therefore stressed the need for the police to give guns to only "Those who are trained and mature enough to know when to use them instead of wasting innocent lives", and counselled the deceased's family to seek justice through constitutional means.

Meanwhile, when news of the tragic incident filtered in, irate youths were mobilised from the kinsmen of the victim who took his corpse to the funeral venue

demanding explanations to the circumstances surrounding the wasting of one of their own.

The rampaging mob, who besieged the venue with weapons chanted war songs and disrupted the entire funeral as they bluntly refused that the old man's corpse expected from Umuahia would be brought home until adequate compensation was paid for their slain kinsmen.

The funeral almost ended in fracas as the situation degenerated into a free-for-all fight until late in the evening when a truce was eventually brokered courtesy of some traditional rulers and opinion leaders in the area.

But before then, according to eye witnesses, the rampaging mob had inflicted a heavy economic injury on both the old man's family and the neighbourhood as they set ablaze canopies and Chairs for

the ceremony and hijacked a cooling van conveying drinks to the venue and emptied the contents.

Meanwhile, when our correspondent visited the Ihube home town of the deceased, his father, Mr. Sunday Ezeigbo, only confirmed the incident but was too emotional to give details as mourners were still trooping into the compound amidst heavy weeping and wailing.

Later in an interview, the Area Commander in charge of Okigwe police command, Mr. Pau Aliyu (ACP), vehemently denied that the action was perpetrated by a police officer, and challenged any person with concrete evidence of police involvement or the identity of the responsible police officer, to furnish his office with such information.

He also denied sending any police officer to the venue for any security mission.

FG to assist Boko Haram victims

AHMED MARI, Maiduguri

MINISTER of Interior, Dr. Shettima Mustapha, said the Federal Government is looking into possible ways to assist the Boko Haram victims in Borno State and other parts of the North.

The Minister stated this when he paid a condolence visit to the state governor and people of Borno state at the Government House, Maiduguri to commensurate with him over the carnage unleashed on the state by the Boko Haram sect members.

The Minister said he was in the state for on the spot assessment of damages done to government properties and individuals, so as to make recommendation to the Federal Government for assistance, adding that this carnage should serve as an eye opener to the government to live up to its responsibility in protecting peoples lives and properties.

Mustapha stated that "In this 21st century while youths from developed countries were busy playing with computers and other hi-tech gadgets, it is very unfortunate that an illiterate man like Mohammed Yusuf can convinced graduates of higher institutions to tear their hard earned certificates".

He also advised parents to take proper care of their children and monitor their activities, so as not to fall into the hands of miscreants like late Yusuf and prayed that Borno state should not witness such madness and senseless killings of innocent citizens again.

Responding, Governor Sheriff said he was most grateful to President Umaru Yar'Adua for deploying troops to Borno state to curtail the activities of Boko Haram, which he described as a total madness and not connected with any religion.

Sheriff said "I was even surprised that a former Commissioner, who served in my cabinet, Alhaji Buji left his legitimate businesses to join the Boko Haram sect. I was dumbfounded when one day the late Commissioner walked into my office and advised me to resign as Governor and pursue heaven. I then asked whether he was in his right senses".

He said the aim of Boko Haram was to overthrow governments at all levels and establish an Islamic government through out the country and vowed to see the end of western education.

The Governor advised groups and individuals to stop making unguarded statements that would jeopardise the peace and tranquillity that has returned to the state, adding that the Borno state government is always ready to protect lives and properties of people living in the state.