

Kidnapped Man Dies, Toddler Falls Sick

From **Kelvin Ebiri and
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(Port Harcourt)

IT was a sad end for Mr. Njo Amadi yesterday. Gunmen, who abducted him a week

ago at Rumuolumeni, near Port Harcourt, Rivers State dumped his dead body at a site for the family.

The family now mourning him record-

ed a double loss as the gunmen, who demanded N8 million ransom for Amadi's release had collected part of the money and arranged for a place where the

family could re-unite with him.

This was not to be as anxious members of the victim's immediate family, who rushed to the agreed place, met

his lifeless body when they thronged there. The cause of Amadi's death is yet to be established.

Also, the health of one of the toddlers, Kelechi

Okocha, abducted by gunmen four days ago in the state is said to be failing.

One-and half-year-old Kelechi, the family told *The Guardian* yester-

day had fallen sick in the hands of his abductors and denied access to treatment.

The father of the toddlers, Mr. Rufus

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Man Dies In Captivity

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Okocha, also narrated the traumatic experience of the children since they were kidnapped.

Last week, Amadi's captors demanded the sum of N8 million as ransom. *The Guardian* learnt that even after his relatives allegedly parted with an undisclosed amount of money, he was still not released alive.

A source, who pleaded anonymity revealed that following the payment of money to the captors, some members of the deceased were directed to go to somewhere around Iwofe where the gunmen promised to drop Amadi. On reaching there, the anxious family presuming that he was sleeping, rejoiced that the kidnappers had kept their promise. But they were wrong. Amadi was dead and when that dawned on them, they went home weeping.

The widow, Justina, however, summoned courage and headed for the police station, where she reported the matter.

The spokesperson of

the state police command, Mrs. Ireju Barasua confirmed the incident. She explained that following Amadi's abduction, one of his sons was arrested by the State Security Services (SSS) for interrogation.

She said it was Amadi's widow (Justina) who notified the police of the death of the victim. "We really don't have the details of the circumstance of his death. But we have been informed by the family that he was found dead," Barasua said.

Narrating the ordeal of the abducted toddlers, Okocha said: "The child, Kelechi is still using pampers and still eating special baby cereals so I wonder how my children are coping. I can't sleep anymore, I can't eat. How can I eat when my children are out there suffering? I am worried because it is obvious that they have been exposed to health hazard."

Similarly, the mother of the toddlers, Mrs. Choice Okocha, who looked pale with tears rolling down her cheeks, appealed to well meaning Nigerians to assist her secure the release of her kids.

She shared her grief with *The Guardian* in Port Harcourt thus: "I am no longer myself, I can't think anymore, I can't eat, I cannot do anything again in the house. I need help from well-meaning Nigerians and the security agencies to help me out of this condition and secure freedom for my children."

Also, a psychologist at the University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital (UPTH), who spoke under the condition of anonymity, explained that the incident would have psychological effects on the toddlers in the future.

Concerned by their health conditions, he called on the abductors to release the kids knowing that one day they would have their own children and would not wish them to be treated this way.

The toddlers were seized at a daycare centre at the University of Port Harcourt on Tuesday morning.

Worried by the upsurge in the kidnap of innocent citizens in the state, the Joint Task Force (JTF) has called on the public to assist security agencies with useful

information that would help stop the menace.

In a statement signed by the JTF spokesman, Major Sagir Musa, it noted that "the war against abduction and other vices need not to be left to the security agencies alone; the larger public has a great responsibility to promptly and immediately disseminate useful, credible and timely information to the security agencies, especially when they happened to witness such acts."

JTF maintained that it was only through timely reporting of witnessed criminal acts that the security personnel could immediately respond and thwart such acts.

"The JTF wishes to sensitise the public on the need for their partnership in restoring law and order and dedicates the following phone lines as public information lines for the use of patriotic members of the public. The numbers are: 084-232215, 084-897000 and 07036889311," it added.

Meanwhile, Governor Chibuike Amaechi has attributed criminal

activities such as kidnapping in the Niger Delta to hunger caused by neglect of the people by the oil companies operating in the region.

At a dinner in honour of the Executive Director, Exploration and Production of Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC), Mr. Malcolm Brinde in Port Harcourt, Amaechi said the people of the state were dissatisfied with the way oil multinationals were treating them.

He said: "If Shell was employing our people or empowering our people financially, there would have been no kidnapping, because I think the reason for kidnapping is that these men have no means of livelihood."

He said the state was however doing its best to secure life and property and solicited the cooperation of SPDC because "the cost of maintaining security was too heavy for the government alone to bear."

Brinde acknowledged that security is one of the challenges confronting Shell.