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Pastor falls in Makurdi's killing fields*From Simeon Nwakaudu, Makurdi*

GRADUALLY, Makurdi, the Benue State capital, has become the most insecure state capital in the North Central region, with the lives of citizens increasingly at the mercy of murderers and deadly assassins on the prowl, in the nooks and crannies of the state.

It started with a university don, Dr. Gwa Jande.

He was killed while relaxing with friends at a pub near the Benue State University, Makurdi.

Then, came the turn of Tony Udu, the Benue State Chairman of Trade Union Congress, (TUC). More questions were asked and the answers were not forthcoming over the two murder cases.

On Wednesday, the agents of death, still free on the streets of Makurdi, struck again.

This time, they invaded the home of a humble cleric and civil servant, Pastor Gideon Adoor, and shot him to death in cold blood in the presence of his family members.

The two shots fired by his killers in the early, chilly hours of that morning, must have sent ominous shivers down the spines of whoever heard them in the neighbourhood.

As in earlier cases, the question agitating the minds of all concerned citizens of Benue State is whether Adoor died at the hands of armed robbers or hired killers?

Pastor Gideon Adoor, a relative of former Nigeria's Chief of Army Staff, General Victor Malu, was in his home at the BBL Quarters Extension in Makurdi, the Benue State capital, when his assailants struck.

The gunmen, said to have been three in number, stormed the home of the late pastor of the NKST Church, and successfully broke into the room of his first son, Kenneth, whom they beat up, hit him with their gun-butt, before he was dragged out.

The assailants, Kenneth told The Guardian, demanded for money from him.

When he told them that he had none, they told him to take them to his father.

Kenneth said he went to the window and called his father, who, upon opening the door, was shot twice on his chest and

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waist by the assailants.

He said after shooting his father, the killers made no attempt to enter the room, but only retreated into the rainy darkness, without taking anything from the house.

The fatally wounded Adoor, who was also an estate surveyor with the Benue State Ministry of Lands and Survey, was confirmed dead on arrival at the Federal Medical Centre, where neighbours had quickly taken him for treatment.

When contacted, the Benue State Police Commissioner, Ibrahim Mohammed, confirmed the killing of Pastor Gideon Adoor, saying that the police received a distress call from the neighbourhood and responded swiftly, which led to the killing of one of assailants.

He stated that before Adoor gave up the ghost, he kept on calling the name of one of his partners, who resided within the neighbourhood.

He said the police were now on the trail of that suspect and hoped to apprehend him soon.

The police commissioner said the slain pastor, after his son called him, came out of his room armed with an iron rod, before the assailants gunned him down.

At the home of the slain pastor, church members and neighbours gathered to console the wife and children who wept uncontrollably at the murder of their husband and father.

But the controversy going on is whether it was an armed robbery attack or a case of assassination.

This controversy has gained ground following a story making the rounds that the slain robber, though residing in the area, might have been involved in a different robbery escapade near NITEL headquarters on the same route.

That same night, during the heavy rains, another gang of armed robbers operated around the NITEL headquarters area.

The residents of the area had sent a distress call to the police, to which the police responded swiftly.

The robbers were dislodged and some people reasonably believe that the slain suspected robber could have been involved in that NITEL robbery.

That belief is reinforced by the fact that the BBL Quarters Extension, where the late Pastor Adoor lived, did not have any good road.

Many people who attempted to drive to the late Pastor's home were stuck on the road.

They left their cars and trekked the distance to the Adoors' home.

A resident of the BBL Quarters Extension, Mr. Gabriel Shisha, described the late pastor as a very humble and sincere man, who was very religious and believed in doing everything the right way.

He said the fact that the killers took nothing from his home made it difficult for anyone to think that the case was a robbery operation.

He said that no other home in the area was robbed, noting that the killers left after they killed the pastor.

Shisha added that as an estate surveyor at the State Ministry of Lands and Survey, the late Adoor was known as one of the most upright officers of that ministry who abhorred corruption and dubious allocation of plots of land to unsuspecting members of the public.

"Everything points to the fact that Pastor Adoor might have been assassinated.

But one wonders who would want to assassinate such a humble and religious man who was not after material wealth? We are disturbed because the assailants did not take anything away from the home after killing him," he said.

Another resident of the area, Terngu Denen, regretted that security in the state was getting worse by the day. He said that the government should liaise with the Police Command to re-structure the security of the state, especially the state capital.

He said: "The manner that people are killed and kidnapped in the state does not speak well for our state. The situation should be arrested to avoid further loss of human lives".

He suggested that more policemen should be drafted on foot patrol in conjunction with vigilance groups in the outskirts of the town, where most of the criminals live and operate at nights.

Residents worry that many more lives may be lost at the hands of murderous criminals who seem to have been let loose in Makurdi.

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