

5 feared dead as Tompolo's father is buried

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• Tompolo's Alleged Presence A Ruse, Gbaramatu Chief

Not less than five persons were feared dead in a boat mishap on Warri River as many boats conveyed mourners to Kurutie, in Warri South West Local Council, for the burial of Chief Thomas Ekpemupolo, father of wanted Government Ekpemupolo, popularly known as "Tompolo."

Ekpemupolo died a fortnight ago, from injuries he allegedly sustained in the hands of officers and men of the Nigerian Army.

However, as the funeral of Chief Ekpemupolo went on, reports that the wanted ex-militant leader attended his father's burial filtered in, but was later dispelled as a hoax.

The confusion was later trailed to a picture circulated to some journalists via Whatsapp with the caption "Government Ekpemupolo alias Tompolo with police escorts at his father's burial yesterday at Gbaramatu," which showed the wanted ex-militant leader, dressed in all white traditional attire surrounded by hundreds of supporters, alongside two police escorts.

The picture, which was allegedly circulated by Tompolo's loyalists to make the ex-militant leader look unscathed, was dismissed as false claim.

Said a Gbaramatu chief: "I have spoken to several people who attended the burial and none of them confirmed that Tompolo attended. How can a man who has no police escort attend accompanied by policemen? The picture being circulated is an old picture and not taken at Tompolo's father's burial."

One of the five victims of the boat mishap is a Hausa petty-trader, who was taking his wares to sell at the venue of the burial.

The boat carrying mostly women, capsized shortly after take-off at Miller Waterside Jetty in Warri.

Speaking on the tragic incident that occurred late Friday evening, the Gbaramatu community leader, who did not want his name in print told journalists: "We were already at the funeral celebrating Chief Thomas Ekpemupolo, when we got news of the accident.

"Initially, we were told it was only two persons that died; but we later learnt that about five persons, including three females from Ogulagha, another female from Kurutie, and a man apparently from the Northern part of the country, who was conveying some wares to trade at the funeral ground, lost their lives."