

Cross River: Children of murdered Catholic women ask for justice

By Tina Agosi Todo, Calabar

06 September 2022 | 3:43 am



Children of one of the widows killed in Cross River State over allegation of witchcraft, yesterday, narrated the ordeal of their late mother at the hands of Ebbaken youths.

The children said their mother and aunty were accused unjustly and murdered for what they knew nothing about as they called for justice for the late widows.

In an interview with The Guardian in Calabar, Victoria Ogar and Lawrence Osong said their mother's legs were tied to a wood, while their aunty was blindfolded with hands and legs tied with a tyre placed on her neck.

The two late widows: Mrs. Martina Osong, a farmer and Mrs. Rose Akom, a retired nurse from Ebbaken community in Boje, the headquarters of Boki Local Council of Cross River State were condemned to death through jungle justice, in the early morning of August 27, 2022.

On that black Saturday, they were tortured to death by Ebbaken youths on allegations by one Mrs. Beatrice Obishi and her son, Wilfred Obishi that they appeared in her dream to initiate her to witchcraft.

Mrs. Ogar, who was hospitalised on hearing of her mother's tragic death, described her mother, Martina, as a God-fearing woman that was devoted to her Catholic faith.

In tears she narrated how her mother was disgracefully killed along with her aunty, the late Rose on mere assumption that was not investigated or confirmed.

She said: "My mum had a duty to God, every Saturday morning, she would go to mass, after church, she would clean the church. From my childhood, I know my mum cleans the church.

"When I was still with her, I used to assist her in cleaning the church, through her, I learnt that you must clean the house of God.

"On that Black Saturday that she was killed, I learnt they were fasting, the church declared a fast, which she participated in. As she was coming back from church, the youths held her and disgracefully killed her and her sister on allegation that a woman, Mrs. Beatrice Obishi saw them in her dream that they gave her meat to eat.

"They tied a wood under her legs and another wood with nails on top of her legs and tied it by the side the same way we tie garri in the village. They hit her with sticks and broke her hand. They stepped on her stomach till blood gushed out of her anus. You can only imagine the pain my mum went through. They left her, till evening to die.

"I want justice for my beloved mother," she cried.

The only son of the late widow, Lawrence Osong, said: "On August 26, at about 6:00 p.m., I got a call from my nephew that one Mrs. Beatrice Obishi came to our compound and was flogging my mother with cutlass on the assumption that she and my aunty were witches. The woman claimed that she saw them in her dream where they were forcing her to eat meat and killed her son. I immediately directed my nephew to go to the police and report the incident, unfortunately, the police officers were not on duty.

"He also told me that he had reported the case to the community chairman who agreed to call the council the next day. The next day, which was on August 27, I directed him to go to the chairman and remind him that they should stay action, since I was in Calabar.

“ I told him that I would be coming down to the village on Sunday. That very day, the youths went ahead to accost her and my aunty on their way back from church and brought them to the village square. The village council demanded that they should take it spiritual rather than speculating on mere dreams, but the youths refused and the chiefs could not stand their grounds. They allowed the youths to take our mothers away for torture.

“They took them behind the community hall, tied them up with wooden nails like bags of cassava. They beat her up, until they broke her hand and left her half dead.

“Then one of my nephews, Abraham, went and asked for permission from the community chairman to carry my mother, who was lying half dead, which he granted. On his way, Beatrice’s son, Wilfred, came with a stick and hit my nephew, he fell with my mother.

“ That was how they brutally tortured my mother and her sister Rose to death. My nephews were only allowed to carry them at about 8:00p.m., before 12 midnight, she gave up.

“She was alone in her room, nobody noticed that she had passed on, it was when Rose was confirmed dead at the health centre, my nephew now went to her room to check on her and found her dead.

Luckily, when the whole thing was going on, I directed my nephew to take photographs and videos, since we could not reach the police, and immediately forwarded them to the Commissioner of Police. I also forwarded them to the Police Public Relations Officer and put a call across to the Divisional Police Officer of Boki Division.

“On Sunday, I went to make an official complaint, some chiefs that came in pretence to report what happened, were detained by the police in Okonde police station. Upon hearing this, Wilfred and the youths who carried out the killings, ran and left the community.

“We demand justice for my late mother who was brutally murdered. We are really seeking support and assistance from the Federal and State governments and the relevant authorities,” he appealed.

MEANWHILE, the state’s Deputy Police Public Relations Officer, Igri Ewa, has confirmed the arrest of the chiefs and Mrs. Obishi, adding that investigation is still ongoing.

“ Right from the day the case was reported, we have made arrests of some persons. They are in our custody, but I will get back to you to inform you, as we make progress,” he assured.