

Tension In Onitsha Over Killing Of Market Leader

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Tension on Tuesday gripped Onitsha, the commercial nerve centre of Anambra State, when news spread that Ogbaru Main Market Caretaker Committee Chairman, Chukwudum Atuilamma, was killed on Sunday night.

There is speculation that he was assassinated when he and three other members of the committee were going to Abuja to clarify matters at police headquarters.

For many years there has been turmoil in the market over leadership.

Atuilamma's body was brought home on Monday and deposited at Borromeo Mission Hospital, Onitsha.

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Over Killing Of Market Leader

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When news of his death broke, the market was promptly shut and a team of police officers and members of the market's vigilante group deployed to keep people away.

He may have been shot by robbers, according to Amusa Bello, Deputy Commissioner of Police.

Caretaker Committee Vice Chairman, Ndubuisi Ochiogu, and Jude Ukachi, both of whom travelled with Atuilamma, narrated that they were on their way to Abuja by night bus on Sunday when the propeller of the vehicle pulled out at Idoji village near Okene.

They said while the driver and his conductor were repairing the bus, six hoodlums emerged from the bush and demanded N50,000 from the driver, who explained that he did not have such money.

"The hoodlums became angry. They then ordered all of us into the bus and ordered us again to come down one after another, during which everybody was thoroughly searched and cash and mobile phones were taken from us.

"When Atuilamma came down he handed to them N250,000. But they demanded for more and he responded that he had no more money. They searched him and found more money at his back pocket and shot him," Ukachi recounted.

He added that they fought with the robbers with the intention to disarm them, during which both he and Ochiogu received bullet injuries.

However, Bello explained that the call he got from the market leaders indicated that the passengers wanted to disarm the robbers, giving rise to a struggle during which a gun shot that was released hit Atuilamma.

Governor Peter Obi's Adviser on Market and Parks, Silva Nwobu-Alor, noted that the police are investigating the matter and those found guilty will be prosecuted.