

SundayNews

**NDDC: Lobbyists
out Nwuche, Opara
others as Ugwoha's
replacement**

By **Daniel Abia**
Sr. Correspondent,
Port-Harcourt

THE CLAMOUR for who takes over from Chibuzor Ugwoha, sacked Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), has continued to heat up the political discourse in Rivers State.

Both Ugwoha and the Board were sacked last Wednesday by President Goodluck Jonathan after the Presidential Probe Committee set up by the Federal Government found the former Agip Assistant Manager culpable of most of the allegations leveled against him and his team.

The removal of Ugwoha, whose board was described as the most crisis-ridden in the history of the Commission, has thrown the plump position of the MD/CEO open, with job seekers falling upon themselves to get the anointing from the Rivers State Governor, Abia Amaechi, as a better replacement.

Familiar names like two former Deputy Speakers in the House of Representatives, Justin Opara and Chibudum

By **Abdulkareem Haruna**,
Senior Reporter, Maiduguri

AN UNIDENTIFIED gun man on Saturday afternoon killed Babakura Alhaji Fugu, brother-in-law to ex-Boko Haram leader, Sheikh Muhammad Yusuf, barely 48 hours after Babakura had a peace meeting with former president, Olusegun Obasanjo, in Maiduguri, the Borno State capital. Sources said the parley was aimed at resolving the sect's activities that had in recent times put the nation under serious stress.

Heads of Security Operations in Maiduguri confirmed the incident.

Eyewitnesses said Babakura was killed at about 1:30pm by a man wearing a brown *Jallabiya* (long Arabian gown), who simply appeared from a corner and shot straight at his target who at that time was sitting under a tree near the family house in the company of friends and relatives.

"After killing Babakura, he fired four times at a parked car to scare people away before walking away through the way he came," said a family member, in tears.

Members of the *Jamaatu Ahlil Sunna lida'awati Wall Jihad*, or Boko Haram, had immediately claimed responsibility

Boko Haram kills sect leader's in-law

via a text message sent to the Hausa Service of the BBC.

Babakura, according to those who knew him well, was a teacher and the eldest son of the late Baafur Alhaji Fugu, the father-in-law of ex-Boko Haram spiritual leader, Sheikh Mohammed Yusuf, who was killed together with his father-in-law during the 2009 Boko Haram-led insurgency.

Sunday Independent gathered that Babakura was killed by angry Boko Haram members who were not happy with his position during his Thursday meeting with Obasanjo.

However, Babakura had on Friday revealed to *Sunday Independent* details of the family's meeting with the former president, stating that sustainable peace could only be realised if the Federal Government hearkened to the demands of the sect members.

Obasanjo, who arrived Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, alongside Comrade Shehu Musa of the Civil Liberty Organisation (CLO) on Thursday afternoon, later had a closed-door meeting with members of the deceased Boko Haram leader.

Sunday Independent gathered that the former presi-

dent and his entourage were received by the eldest son of the killed father-in-law of late Muhammed Yusuf, at their demolished household behind railway quarters, Maiduguri.

It was also learnt that the retired Army General, who was accompanied by a thick retinue of security officials, insisted that all should wait outside the building as he intended to hold the meeting privately.

The spokesman of the family, Babakura Alhaji Fugu (who is now deceased), told our reporter on Friday: "Indeed, we received President Obasanjo in our house yesterday (Thursday); his mission was very clear. He said he came to condole with our family over what happened during the 2009 Boko Haram insurgency, especially the extra-judicial killing of our father, and the wanton destruction of our family house. He promised that he would convey our plight to Mr. President within a week or two. And thereafter will get back to us directly or through an emissary, although he said categorically that he was not sent by the Federal Government; he said he came to us on his own. We were made

to be aware of his coming through the National Human Rights Commission which intimated us of his intentions."

On the kind of discussion they had with the former President, Babakura, whose junior sister was the wife of the late Boko Haram leader, said: "We have told him our predicament, especially the destruction of our family house, and also the need for the state government to abide by the court order which ruled that compensation of N100 million be paid for the extra-judicial killing of our father; and also to tell the security agencies to stop harassing and intimidating our family members over issues related to Boko Haram."

He added that though the agitation of the Boko Haram is quite distinct from that of theirs, he said "there is still need for government to honour the demands of the sect members especially on the withdrawal of the Joint Task Force."

Babakura also revealed that the mother of the former Commissioner for Religious Affairs, who later became a top member and financier of Boko Haram, Alhaji Buji Fai, was also at the meeting. He noted

that she was said to have lamented before Obasanjo that government should come to her aid in providing financial assistance to the bereaved children of the former commissioner, who was killed extra-judicially in the 2009 Boko Haram face off.

Shehu Musa, who spoke to the Hausa Service of the BBC on Friday afternoon, and monitored by our reporter in Maiduguri, said he midwifed Obasanjo's meeting with the Boko Haram family based on his conviction that he has the credential of a Nigerian leader that could mediate between the government and the sect.

Musa said part of the reason that made him pick Obasanjo as the best bet for the needed negotiation with the Boko Haram was that, even though he received serious security report on the sect members' activities, he did not order any military action on them. "So that made him a perfect arbiter in the ongoing quest for dialogue," he said.

He also confirmed that Obasanjo actually insisted that no security deployed in Maiduguri to accompany him to the meeting be allowed into the family house of the Boko Haram relatives.