

Youths Kill Policeman, Four Others, Raze Church In Akure

.Six Die In Collapsed Mining Pit In Jos

By **Bolu-Olu Esho** - December 19, 2019

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Akure – A policeman and four unidentified persons were killed on Wednesday as irate youths burnt down a church, Sotitobire Miracle Centre, in Oshinle area of Akure, the Ondo State capital, where a toddler, Gold Kolawole, got missing.

But the police said only a policeman and an unidentified person were killed. There had been tension in the area over the reported disappearance of the one-year-old boy Gold Kolawole, at the church on November 10.

Eyewitness accounts revealed that trouble started when the rumour that the body of the missing child was allegedly buried in the altar of the church and had been exhumed by lieutenants of the leader of the church, Prophet Babatunde Alfa.

It was alleged that the body of the one-year-old Gold Kolawole was hurriedly exhumed when it was learnt that men of the Department of State Services (DSS), who had taken the leader of the church into custody, were

planning to come and dig the altar area in search of evidence.

The founder of the church, Alfa Babatunde, was arrested by DSS on December 8 following a petition written by the parents of the missing boy. Kolawole, according to reports, was last seen in company of his parents at a programme held at the church on November 10 about 11:30a.m.

There were rumours that one of the members of the church, who was arrested in connection with the missing child, had confessed to the crime and indicted the leader of the church, which prompted the body guards of the prophet to quickly exhume the body of the missing boy.

Storming the church premises at Oshinle area of Akure, the church building and a vehicle were set ablaze by the irate youths, while many people were attacked, particularly journalists who were on ground to cover the unfolding incident following reports that the corpse of the missing boy was exhumed from the church.

The billboard of the church at another branch in Oba Ile area of Akure was also pulled down.

One of the policemen, who came to restore law and order in the area, was allegedly hacked down by the irate youths, who accused the police of shielding the leader of the church from prosecution before the DSS took over the case.

No fewer than four people, including the policeman, died during the incident, while several others sustained varying degrees of injuries.

Sources revealed that some miscreant allegedly described as the hired thugs of the prophet resisted the irate youths who stormed the premises of the church and torched it thereby leading to free-for-all.

Among the victims are Temitope Adedeji, correspondent, Western Post, who was attacked by some thugs supporting the church leader, receiving treatment at a private hospital.

Most of the victims were passers-by who were caught in the middle of the crisis.

Mr. Femi Joseph, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) in Ondo State, confirmed the killing of a policeman and an unidentified person while speaking with newsmen on Wednesday.

Joseph had in an earlier statement on Wednesday dismissed reports that the corpse of the missing Kolawole was exhumed inside the church.

“It is most unfortunate that this misleading information spearheaded by a popular TV station has ignited spontaneous reactions from the people leading to wanton destruction of properties and injuries to many.

“The church building was also set ablaze by irate youths. Some of our officers dispatched to the scene to contain the situation were pelted with stones with many of them sustaining injuries.

“Their patrol vehicle was also badly damaged,” Joseph had said in the statement.

Joseph called on the public not to be hoodwinked by reports that the command had abandoned the investigation of the incident, saying the case file was already on the way to the DPP for legal advice.

Six Die In Collapsed Mining Pit In Jos

Meanwhile, six persons died as a mining pit collapsed on Tuesday at Zawan community in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau.

Mr. Gwottson Fom, member representing Jos South Constituency in the state House of Assembly confirmed the incident to newsmen on Wednesday.

Fom said that the ages of the victims ranged from 20 to 27, describing the incident as “sad and unfortunate”.

A correspondent, who visited the area, reports that many others sustained injuries in the incident.

The lawmaker noted that the victims died engaging in illegal activity.

“We know that these young persons died carrying out an illegal activity but it is obvious unemployment led them into doing it.

“People go out of their way to do things considered illegal just to fend for themselves and their families.

“This is not time to apportion blames but it is sad and unfortunate that a community will lose six youths in a day,” he said.

Fom called on illegal miners to desist from the act and engage in other acceptable ventures.

“If people must engage in mining activities, they should do it the right way. They must ensure they are licensed to do it,” he advised.

Earlier, Mr. Emmanuel Gyang, an eyewitness and youth leader in the community told newsmen that the incident occurred on Tuesday afternoon. Gyang described the incident as devastating, saying that it was the first of

such incident in the community.

According to him, over 50 persons were inside the mining pit when it collapsed on them, while others were rescued with various degrees of injuries.

“This is the first time we are experiencing such ugly incident in this community.

“It is a devastating situation; losing six youths in one day is really sad and a monumental loss,” he said.

Gyang said that the corpses had been buried, while the injured were currently receiving treatment at Our Lady of Apostles Hospital, Zawan.



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