

# Abductors kill U.S. returnee in Edo after ransom

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***By Bisi Olaniyi, Southsouth Bureau Chief***

The decomposing body of a United States-based Etsako Prince, Eloniyo Dennis Abuda, was on Wednesday found by the police in a forest in Edo State, four days after he was abducted by criminals posing as herdsmen.

A team, led by the Commissioner of Police, Philip Ogbadu, found Abuda's corpse – with deep injuries – days after his family paid N10 million ransom.

*The Nation* learnt that his abductors shot him dead reportedly after he slumped during the forced long march to the bush.

Abuda, President of Fugar America Foundation, and who was based in Atlanta, was abducted last Saturday with his wife and two other men – family members – along the Benin-Auchi Road end of the Benin Bypass.

He was said to be travelling from his hometown, Fugar, in Etsako Central Local Government Area (LGA) to Lagos to catch a flight to the US when their vehicle was stopped and they were seized by the kidnappers.

The other hostages, who were freed after the ransom was paid, led security officials to the scene.

A top police chief in Edo, who was part of Ogbadu's team to the forest, confirmed the discovery via a WhatsApp message at 7:05 pm on Wednesday.

"We are now finally out of the deep forest of Edo State, where the decomposing body of the kidnapped and murdered USA-based Prince Abuda was discovered and recovered. The body has been sent to the mortuary," the officer said.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Chidi Nwabuzor, also confirmed the incident, adding that the police were on a manhunt for the kidnappers.

Nwabuzor, a Superintendent, said the Police Command was on top of the security situation in the state, "thereby ensuring the safety of lives and property of residents in the 18 local government areas of Edo.

"The Commissioner of Police in Edo State personally led operatives to the kidnap scene this (yesterday) morning and they are still in the forest, on active combing of the bush."

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*The Nation* gathered that the kidnappers had demanded N20million to free him, but the family negotiated the ransom downwards to N10 million not knowing that he was already dead.

Abuda returned home in December to celebrate Christmas and New Year with his family.

A source said: "Prince Abuda was shot by the kidnappers when he slumped and could no longer walk. The criminals did not want to leave him behind, being afraid that he would later reveal their hideout to security agencies, thereby shooting him dead."

Another family source, however, painted a different picture and contradicted the police's account.

The source said Abuda was found alive, but in a coma. He was later rushed to an undisclosed hospital in Benin, where a team of medical doctors battled to save his life, without success.

News of the death sparked desolation and anger in parts of the state.

Hundreds of women barricaded the Uromi Road in Esan Northeast LGA that connects travellers coming to the South from Northern Nigeria, causing gridlock

They marched across streets in the town, demanding the immediate eviction of criminals among herders from the area.

They accused them of being responsible for the violence, killings, rape, kidnappings and destruction of farmlands in the area.

Some of the women said they could no longer go to their farms for fear of being raped and killed by herders who allegedly graze their cows on farm crops.

They blocked major roads in the town, including the road from the palace of Ojuromi of Uromi, Anslem Aidenojie II, and the divisional police station, while insisting that they be addressed by the monarch and the Divisional Police Officer, who were out of town.

One of the protesters, Mrs Rosemary Ordia, lamented that people of the area were living in fear, and called for urgent intervention by the government and security agencies.

The Ojuromi of Uromi told *The Nation* on phone that the community had a good, longstanding relationship with its Fulani herdsman residents.

He lamented that some criminals among the herdsman were to blame for atrocities in the area, adding that they had frightened people off their farms.

He said: "The activities of the criminal herdsman are worrisome and quite disturbing. They kidnap our people, rape the women and girls, maim and do a lot of havoc. They do not allow people to go to their farms anymore.

“So, their activities are terrible, but that does not mean that there are no good Fulani people because they have been living with us in peace in the kingdom over the years.

“This set of Fulani people that are engaged in criminal activities are strange and are not known to us. We condemn in entirety their activities, but we are handicapped. We are encouraging vigilance members and supporting the police. That is the best that we can do. We cannot tell our people to take up arms.

“I have asked the women to remain calm, promising them that I will communicate their grievances to the appropriate quarters. I spoke with the DPO and the Area Commander. I will reach Governor Godwin Obaseki, the chief security officer of Edo State, to let him know of the terrible situation.

“The killer herdsmen have been in my domain since they started appearing in other parts of Nigeria. There is no part of the country that is spared of the activities of the criminal elements. It is just that they are disturbing our people from carrying out their daily activities.”

The monarch also stated that he and his subjects were hopeful that God would help to resolve the matter, for him and his people to live in peace and carry out their daily activities without fear

In January, Ondo State Governor Rotimi Akeredolu asked herders to vacate the state’s forest reserves over rising insecurity.

He said: “Bad elements” had turned the forest reserves into hideouts for keeping victims of kidnapping, negotiating ransom and carrying out other criminal activities.

On Tuesday, governors in the Southeast reiterated the ban on open grazing of cattle in the region.

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