

Tears, sorrow as hoodlums invade Ogun community

- I want my son's corpse, says grandma whose child was shot dead

By Gbenga ADERANTI And Opeye... Last updated Oct 31, 2021



- From left: Youth leader, Hon Odunoye Kolawole Rasak; Tayese of Imoshe, Chief Waheed Lawal; Baale of Imoshe, Chief Amusa Lawal; the deceased mother, Abiona; and Community Secretary Chief Amidu Seidu

It has been more than one year since a grandmother, Madam Alice Abiona, lost her son during an attack on Imoshe, a community in Ado-Odo Local Government Area, by suspected land grabbers, but she is still pleading for the release of the remains of her late son in order to give him proper burial.

Mathew's body has been in the custody of the Ogun State Government since his death on September 27, as the government insists on keeping it until the case is determined in court.

Narrating the incident in an interview with our correspondent, Madam Abiona, who now has to take care of the three children left behind by her late son, said: "On that fateful day, some thugs invaded our village, but the villagers did not know that the thugs were very many. Before we knew what was going on, they had started attacking the villagers.

"The thugs started shooting indiscriminately at everyone, including schoolchildren. In the end, five people, including Matthew, sustained serious bullet wounds."

While the bullets that were stuck in the bodies of some of the gunshot victims were later extracted and they survived, Mathew was not as lucky.

“We were told that about six people attacked him at the same time. After the attack, they escaped in the vehicle they came in.”

She said that Mathew died sacrificing his life for the community, adding that the aim of the attackers was to kill or injure whoever they came across in the village.

She said things had been tough for the family, especially the members of Matthew’s immediately family.

“I am appealing to the government to help us. We cannot undo what has been done. They should please release his body to us so that we can bury him,” she pleaded.

She said the family had made efforts to retrieve the body, “but the police are telling us that there is a litigation so they can’t release his body to us. The most unfortunate thing is that those who killed Mathew are yet to be arrested even though they are known.”

But it is not only the grandmother that is in distress. The traditional ruler of Imoshe community, Chief Amusa Lawal, has also been living in fear since the three-hour invasion of the community last year.

He called on the Ogun State governor, Prince Dapo Abiodun, to save his community from likely attacks in the future.

Genesis of crisis

Pandemonium had broken out last year in Ikogbo community, Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area of Ogun State after stray bullets killed two persons and injured several others, including schoolchildren, during a land dispute between the community and the neighbouring Imoshe. The dispute was provoked by an attempt to enforce a court judgment on the disputed land between the two communities in favour of Ikogbo.

The Onikogbo of Ikogbo, Oba Nurudeen Osoja, had invited some policemen to enforce the judgment and seal up the houses on the disputed land. But resistance from the residents forced the policemen to start shooting. In the process, a bullet hit Mathew, an okada (commercial motorcycle) rider who had just returned home from the market. Several schoolchildren and passersby were also said to have sustained bullet wounds. Matthew later died from gunshot injuries.

His corpse has since been deposited in the morgue at the General Hospital in Ota. An autopsy carried out on instruction from the office of the Inspector General of Police in Abuja was said to have revealed that the late Matthew was felled by gun bullets from the police.

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Remembering Matthew

At the first anniversary of the death of Matthew last week, the Baale of Imoshe presented a cash gift to his distraught mother. He said the community was marking the anniversary of his demise in order to show his family that “Matthew is still part of us and he will always remains one of our heroes in Imoshe community.”

He said: “It all started around 11am on that fateful day. We saw police vans moving towards the community, but since we had no skeleton in our cupboard, we waited to receive them.

“But as soon as we were told that the monarch of Ikogbo community, Oba Nurudeen Osoja, was coming with them on a motorcycle, we knew it was more than we thought, because there was an ongoing land dispute between Imoshe and his land.

“The police and the blue bus did not come to my palace or that of any other chief before we started hearing gunshots from the distance. The gunshots lasted about three hours before they left.”

Speaking further, he said: “Ikogbo people have been on our neck for a long time with claims that they are in possession of some of our forefathers’ inheritance.

“The courts resolved the issue but they still came back to pressurise us for what is not theirs.

“I am appealing to Governor Dapo Abiodun to help us. A soul has been lost and my children, Akeem and Segun Lawal, and a Hausa man were badly hit by bullets. Onikogbo of Ikogbo land should stop disturbing us.”

The youth leader of Imoshe community, Hon Odunoye Kolawole Rasak said the land matters between the two communities had not been settled since September 2020.

He said: “We have been instructed to provide our survey plans, which we did immediately before the ENDSARS matters.

“We don’t know if Ikogbo has done its part, but we believe that since the air has been cleared now, we will claim our mandate.

“We will not allow anyone to chase us away from our forefathers’ inheritance. We are the rightful owners.

“We have not heard or smelt anything from Oba Nurudeen Osoja of Ikogbo and his people since last year’s attack on us. Our Baale, Chief Amusa Lawal, is a peace loving leader.

“We want Governor Dapo Abiodun to assist us. We have evidence to prove that Imoshe is the rightful owner of the disputed land.

Onikogbo reacts

Reacting to the allegations, the Baale of Ikogbo, Oba Nurudeen Osoja said: “Ikogbo twice got judgements on the land in contention in 1914 and in 2014 in Ota High Court.

“They went on appeal in Ibadan but we still won. The first thing as a royal father is to call the attention of the government.

“I wrote a petition through my lawyer to the Commissioner of Police, Edward Ajogun Awolowo, and also to the DSS to let them know what was happening.

“They invited the Imoshe people but they didn’t honour the invitation. Later, the Commissioner of Police directed his deputy, and he sent about 10 policemen after three days.

“When the Imoshe people sighted the police, their land grabbers and cultists attacked the policemen, our market and the police station.

“Imoshe people were dragging guns with the policemen. That was what triggered the bullet that killed Mathew. Go to Eleweran police station to confirm.

“When the incident happened, Femi Falana called the Inspector General of Police, the IG called the CP and he mobilised his men

“I was the first person to call the attention of Ogun State Government to do land grabbers law in Ogun State.

“I am a civil engineer. I graduated from YABATECH with distinction. I have MSc in Civil Engineering. I am still practising.”