

# Gunmen go on rampage in Imo, Abia, Ebonyi

**G**UNMEN have gone on the rampage in the Southeast states of Imo, Ebonyi and Abia, killing no fewer than four people.

Among the victims was the traditional ruler of Orsu Obodo in Oguta Local Government Area, Imo State, HRH Eze Victor Ijoma, who was set ablaze in his car.

Also killed was the Isama (traditional prime minister) of Mgbale community also in Oguta LGA.

It was gathered that the two leaders were killed in separate attacks and different locations on Thursday.

Some residents said the Orsu Obodo monarch was accosted at Umuakama junction in the neighbouring Izombe town, where he was killed inside his car.

It was further learnt that the assailants, who were not satisfied with his death, went ahead to set his corpse ablaze together with his car.

On his part, the Mgbale community leader was said to have been killed in his town.

Village sources also disclosed that military and other security operatives have increased their presence in Izombe, Mgbale and the communities around the area in their bid to fish out the perpetrators, who were said to have resorted to hit-and-run tactics.

A villager who pleaded anonymity said:

## •Set monarch ablaze, kill deputy, two others •Abduct another Catholic priest

From Chris Njoku, Owerri and Sunny Nwanikwo, Umuahia

"The Eze Igwe of Orsu Obodo was accosted while he was driving along Umuakama junction in the afternoon.

They shot him, set him ablaze inside his car and left the scene.

"As I am talking to you now, soldiers and other security operatives are combing the villages in search of the assailants."

Police spokesperson in Imo State, Henry Okoye, told newsmen that "the Commissioner of police condemns in strong terms the gruesome murder of the traditional ruler and the prime minister. He has inaugurated high powered team of security men to go all out to arrest the hoodlums.

"We are collaborating with the military and we have increased security presence in the areas with a view to arresting the killers.

"The Commissioner of Police

commiserates with the families of the killed community leaders and prays God gives them the fortitude to bear these irreparable losses."

Again, gunmen abduct Catholic priest, three others in Imo

Another Catholic priest, Rev Fr Mathias Opara, was yesterday kidnapped by gunmen in Imo State.

The priest was abducted in the evening alongside three other occupants of his car.

Opara's abduction came barely five days after a priest in charge of Christ the King Catholic Church at Ezinachi/Ugwuago parish of the Catholic Diocese of Okigwe, Rev. Fr. Jude Maduka, was kidnapped on Sunday just moments before he went for a Sunday Mass.

It was gathered that the priest was abducted along Ejemekwuru-Ogbaku Road housing Oguta and Mbaitoli Local Government Areas of Imo State.

An eyewitness said that the priest popularly known as Owu Ujo was ambushed while driving back to Owerri, the state capital,

after the burial rites of the father of one of his colleagues at Izombe community in the Oguta LGA.

According to the source, the victim is in charge of Man of Order and Discipline of the Catholic Archdiocese of Owerri.

The source said: "Rev. Fr. Mathias Opara, popularly known as Owu Ujo, has just been kidnapped along Ejemekwuru/Ogbaku Road. He was kidnapped alongside others he was in the same vehicle with.

"The incident happened right before us. We were also coming back to Owerri from the funeral rites of the father of another Catholic priest at Izombe in the Oguta Local Government Area of Imo State."

When contacted, the Director of Public Communications of the Owerri Catholic Archdiocese, Rev Fr Raymond Ogu, confirmed the abduction of the priest.

Man in mid-30s killed in Abia

In Aba South Local Government Area, Abia State, gunmen operating in a commercial bicycle numbering four yesterday killed a man in his mid-thirties in front of the First Gate on the Ngwa Road flank of the popular and busy Abia Churu (New Marke).

The gunmen were said to have trailed their target to the first gate where they accosted him and demanded that he hand over the handbag he was carrying.

He was said to have resisted the gang's attempt to take away the bag from him, leading to his being shot dead.

It was learnt that the incident caused a pandemonium as both traders and customers who were carrying out their businesses around the Emejiaka area scammed into safety.

Operatives of the Rapid Response Squad (RRS) arrived at the scene shortly after their army counterparts took the body of the deceased to the morgue.

A trader who pleaded anonymity said: "You know that today (Friday) is usually a busy day for us. Because of the busy economic activities going on here, nobody suspected anything.

"We were here trading when we heard gunshots and people started running in different directions.

"Later, we saw some boys numbering four walking towards a commercial tricycle that parked ahead of them and drove off.

"People close to the scene said that they only saw the group of boys dragging the bag that the victim was carrying, and when he refused to hand over the bag to them, they shot him and left him in the pool of his blood.

"Soldiers on hearing the sound of the gun, rushed to the scene but couldn't meet them. They were just firing warning shots.

"Policemen wearing RRS vest and cap later came to the scene and took the corpse of the deceased away."

When contacted the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Geoffrey Ogbonna who was at the Umuahia Township for the rehearsal ahead of the May 29 swearing-in ceremony, said he was yet to be informed about the incident, promising to get back to our correspondent as soon as he got information on the incident.

He was, however, yet to get back at the time of filing this report.

Hoodlums kill medical trainee in Ebonyi In Ebonyi State, gunmen suspected to be armed robbers on Wednesday killed a medical trainee attached to the Dental Therapy Department of Alex Ekwueme Federal Teaching Hospital, Abakaliki.

The deceased, Kelvin Onuchie, was shot dead in front of the entrance gate of his residence at Mberi Street, Abakaliki.

It was gathered he was outside the gate making calls around 8 pm when gunmen shot at him before fleeing the area.

A source in the area said the victim came back from midweek service and was making a call outside his gate at 'Copers' lodge' where he stays when the gunmen shot him.

The gunmen, according to the source, were suspected to have finished their operation/robbery somewhere in the area.

"They were probably fleeing, only to see Mr. Kelvin Onuchie making calls outside, which they apparently perceived as a threat, and consequently shot him," he said.

The deceased, it was gathered, hailed from Agbor in Delta State.

Police spokesperson in Ebonyi State, Onome Onovwakpoyey, said she was yet to receive a report on the matter.

## £38,000 fake movie deal: EFCC nabs duo for 'impersonating Nollywood actor'

By Robert Egbe

**T**HE Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) yesterday arrested two men for allegedly impersonating Nollywood actor and movie producer, Fredrick Leonard, and using his identity to dupe a British woman of £38,000 in a fake movie deal.

The Commission accused the duo - Charles Osaigbovo and Evans Obayaeo - of involvement in a love scam, computer-related fraud and obtaining the money under false pretence.

EFCC Head of Media & Publicity, Mr. Wilson Uwujaren, said in a statement yesterday that operatives of the agency's Lagos Zonal Command arrested Osaigbovo and Obayaeo following a petition by the British national against Leonard.

Uwujaren said: "The petitioner alleged that she met Leonard on the social media platform, TikTok, and they later became lovers.

"She also alleged that Leonard approached her with a proposal to invest in a film production.

"According to her, a sum of £38,000 was transferred to the suspects as investment in the purported film production.

She petitioned the EFCC after she realised she had been duped and all efforts to recover her money yielded no result.

Investigations revealed that the suspects, who were later arrested in Ibadan, Oyo State, had been impersonating Leonard to defraud unsuspecting people on social media.

The suspects will be charged to court once the investigation is concluded.



•The suspects

## Witnesses in train-BRT staff bus collision narrate experiences to court

By Adebisi Onanuga

**W**ITNESSES in the March 9 collision between a train and a BRT bus conveying officials of the Lagos State Civil Service to work yesterday narrated their experience to an Ikeja High Court.

The witnesses were presented before Justice Oyindamola Ogala by the Lagos State Government.

The BRT driver, Oluwaseun Osibanjo, is facing a nine-count charge offence bordering on grievous harm and involuntary manslaughter by running into a moving train.

Led by the Director of Public Prosecution, Dr Babajide Martins, one of the survivors of the accident, Mr Rotimi Ogundeyi, and a Vehicle Inspection Officer (VIO), Mr Ahmed Barua, testified against the defendant.

Ogundeyi, a 38-year-old civil servant with the Lagos State Water Regulatory Commission, told the court that the bus came from Ikotun on March 9 and he joined it at Isolo.

He said they prayed and listened to newspaper review on their way to work after which he slept off.

He said: "The last thing I heard was 'gbaaaal' and I quickly opened my eyes to check what

was going on. I was seated two seats behind the driver

"Less than five seconds after I jumped up, I could see the train from the window side and I knew the train would definitely hit us.

"The next thing I saw was my bone on the floor. One of the staff in the bus managed to stand up and I quickly told him to pick up my phone for me.

"After that, two men came in to rescue me."

The witness said a car conveyed four of the bus' occupants to Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH) where they were given medical attention.

According to him, a doctor in LASUTH pushed his broken bone inside and a surgery was done on him a week after.

He told the court he did not know the total number of people that died in the accident and that the usual capacity of the bus was between 70 and 80 passengers.

Under cross-examination by the defence counsel Lekan Egberongbe, the witness told the

court that he knew the train driver as a hard working and committed person.

"He had never had an accident with the bus apart from this recent one. I was sleeping when the accident happened," he said.

The second witness, Barua, a vehicle inspection officer (VIO), said he inspected the remnant of the BRT bus after it was towed to the Task Force Office at Alausa.

According to the officer, the bus was electronically and mechanically built.

"We used the official Tecno phone which was connected to the HP laptop and a printer.

"The driver was supposed to carry 40 passengers sitting while 30 standing, but there were 85 passengers in the bus on that day," the officer said.

While under cross-examination, the witness said that he was not at the scene of the accident when it happened and that he was not in the forensic department of VIO.

The Lagos State VIO road inspection report was admitted in evidence.

Justice Oyindamola Ogala adjourned the case until June 16 for ruling on defendant's bail application and continuation of trial.