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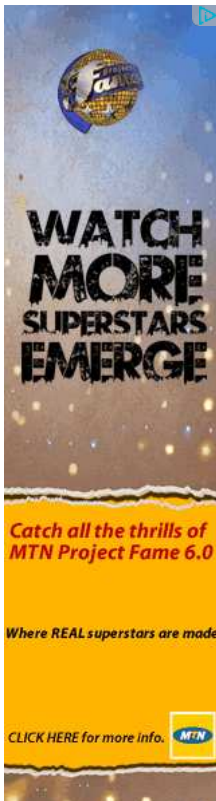
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Imam, others nabbed as kidnapped businessman is found dead 1 yr after

Written by Bode Adewumi Saturday, 31 August 2013 00:00 font size | Print | Email

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ABOUT a year ago, stories of incessant kidnappings were rife in Osun State. More than four different persons were reportedly kidnapped and ransoms were demanded. It was strange at the time, as the South-West had not been known for such crimes, unlike states in the South-East and South-South. Therefore, panic gripped the residents of this part of the country, particularly towns

like Ilesa and Ile-Ife in Osun State.

Indeed, most, if not all of the kidnappings, took place in these towns and the victims were prominent members of the society – which lent credence to the suspicion that the hoodlums were after money. What is more, all the victims were released after ransom had been paid. Police worked round the clock to solve the crimes.

One case, however, proved difficult for them to unravel. On August 5, 2012, a businessman and prominent member of Ilesa town, Mr Idowu Obembe (better known as 'Nobility', owner of Nobility Stores) was kidnapped by hoodlums and this rattled the town because of the man's position in the town as a successful businessman.

When the news broke, the family waited endlessly to hear from the kidnappers. A source close to the police in Osun told Saturday Tribune that a local vigilance group assured the family that it would get their breadwinner back within 24 hours after the kidnap took place – but this was not to be; and the family did not want to involve the police at that stage because of a possible threat from the kidnappers not to do so.

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On September 15 last year, the family finally reported to the police and the latter started their investigation into the case. The police source said they had to start from scratch as the information they had was sketchy, but that they were able to record a bit of success when they arrested two members of the syndicate in Ile-Ife in October last year.

According to the source, two members of the syndicate were arrested around October 2 last year in Ile-Ife who confessed to the crime, but, the source added, police had to look for certain Ahmed, Dada and Ifeoluwa before they could get any lead on the victim. The arrest yielded results in that some information was extracted from the bandits which aided police in their investigation.

According to the source, the police were able to get Dada, who in turn told them that it was only Ifeoluwa and Ahmed who could lead them to where the victim was being held. Ahmed was eventually arrested around April this year at the Olomi area of Ibadan.

His arrest, according to the source, was dramatic in that he was said to possess 'disappearing charm' and another charm with which he could incapacitate anybody if beaten with the charm. He was said to have become an Imam at a mosque in the area and was arrested while coming out of the mosque that morning.

Ahmed, the source said, refused to disclose the whereabouts of the victim, claiming also that unless Ifeoluwa was apprehended, they (police) would not be able to get to the root of the matter. Ahmed's arrest equally proved useful as events turned out. At last, the police were able to nab Ifeoluwa on August 23 this year at the Elere area of Apata in Ibadan, after proving elusive for some months.

According to the source, as soon as Ifeoluwa was arrested, he was said to have confessed to the crime, saying that he had known that his arrest was just a matter time. He took the police to a bush along Ijebu-Jesa-Efon-Alaye road, between Osun and Ekiti states, where the decomposed body of Mr Obembe was discovered by the police.

Ifeoluwa also allegedly told the police that they never planned to kill Obembe, but that it was Ahmed who used his charm on him when he was not cooperating with them, which led to his death.

Obembe's killing, according to Ifeoluwa, led to a big crisis among the bandits. They eventually resolved that they would not announce his death, but would continue to use his disappearance to extort money from his family. This explained why he was not released even after ransom was paid.

After the decomposed corpse of Obembe was discovered, police invited his family, who identified him with the aid of the jeans trousers and sandals he wore the day he left the house on the journey that led to his death.

Confirming the arrest, Mrs Folasade Odoro, the state's Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), said, "Upon a tip-off concerning (a member of) a syndicate who they claimed knew the whereabouts of Idowu Obembe 'm', the Director of Nobility Stores Ilesha, who was kidnapped on 5th August, 2012, a team of policemen attached to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID), Osun State Police Command, traced the suspects to Ibadan in Oyo State, where Gbadegesin Ifeoluwa, aged 29 years, was placed on surveillance and eventually arrested at Elere area, Apata, Ibadan in the early hours of 23rd August, 2013.

"The suspect, on interrogation, confessed to three kidnapping cases in Osun State – kidnapping of Popoola Ogundoyin (a.k.a POPULAT) at life around 19th September, 2011; kidnapping of Pastor Peter Oladipo 'm' of the Apostolic Church Ilesha around 23rd November, 2012 and Idowu Obembe 'm' at Ilesha.

"Detectives acted swiftly and suspect was led to a thick forest at Ilesha where the last victim was held hostage over a year ago. After several searches, victim's remains were found in the bush. Families were contacted for identification before the photograph was taken; victim was identified through his pair of shoes and cloth; remains taken to the mortuary for necessary further investigation. Suspect is assisting the police in their investigation.

"Meanwhile, the Commissioner of Police, CP Dorothy Gimba, said diligent investigation would be carried out on the matter while efforts are ongoing to arrest other members of the gang. The case will be charged to court as soon as investigation is concluded," the PPRO said.

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