

Assassinations: Plateau politicians go underground

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POLITICAL aspirants in Plateau State have gone underground, following a spate of unresolved murder and assassination attempts in the state.

No fewer than five attempts had been made on the life of notable politicians in the state in the last few weeks.

It started with the attempt on the life of a member of the House Representatives, representing Langtang North and South, Mr. Victor Lar.

Some weeks later, it was

the turn of a governorship aspirant under the Advanced Congress of Democrats [ACD], Mr. Pam Dung Gyang.

The assassins reportedly trailed him to his house in Bukuru after his party held a rally in Barkin Ladi.

Though he was lucky to have escaped, one of his aides was, however, gunned down by the marauders.

The attack on Gyang followed the same pattern with the killing of another gubernatorial aspirant under the ACD, Mr. Jesse Arukwu.

After a similar rally held by his party in his Bassa Lo-

cal Government Area, he came home. But he had to dash out to buy some drugs after complaining to his wife that he had a slight fever.

Two days later, his body was found dumped in a ditch some few kilometres to his house.

Even private citizens were not spared. One I. G Omu, said to be a younger brother of the former Director General of the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Maj. Gen Paul Omu [rtd], was killed in his house, while a legal practitioner, Mr.

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Pedrales Osokpor was gunned down in the heart of the city centre.

Sunday Punch investigations showed that most of the other political leaders no longer answer phone calls, except the ones the numbers they could easily recognise.

Their fears were based on the fact that those who killed Arukwu called him up on his mobile phone.

While politicians from the ACD and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) were pointing accusing fingers at one another, a member of the House of Representatives, Mr. Jafaru Damulak, has exonerated the PDP from the killings.

Damulak, representing Shendam/Qua'an Pan/Mikang Federal Constituency, said that the killings had to be explained within the context of the ACD since PDP

would have nothing to gain from killing any politician in another political party.

Damulak, who spoke to our correspondent in Jos, the state capital, on Friday, described the trend as frightening and called on the police to take swift measures to arrest the trend.

He said it was despicable that anybody would think of taking another person's life for the sake of acquiring power.

It was also discovered that most of the politicians have resorted to the use of private security guards as the police try to solve the riddle surrounding the spate of assassinations in the state.

An ACD member, who spoke to our correspondent on a condition of anonymity, also accused the police of assigning their men to PDP leaders.

But the Plateau State Police Command Commis-

sioner, Mr. Richard Chime, denied the allegation, saying no member of ACD had so far asked for police protection.

Chime said that while other political parties asked for police permission to hold rallies, ACD had failed to do so.

He said, "I challenge any member of ACD to bring a copy of where the police signed for any of such request. They don't even ask for permit to hold their rallies. For instance, some few weeks ago, one of the PDP groups asked for permission to hold their rally in Langtang North, but on the same day, ACD held a rally in Langtang South without any police permit."

Chime said that the police had evolved some strategies to curtail crime wave in the state, adding that some of the strategies were already working.