

Food poisoning palaver: How Edo man shot six, killed three

January 3, 2016



Victims

802

ALEXANDER OKERE writes on how a motor park leader in Edo went on a shooting spree, over alleged food poisoning and leadership tussle, before he was gunned down by the police

For a Saturday, the hustle and bustle of traders and their customers at the busy Ojuromi ultra modern market in Uromi was a normal occurrence. It was December 19, 2015 and just six days to Christmas, the two-lane expressway that leads to the market was not devoid of activities either. Motorcyclists and motorists signified their excitement by honking their horns at passers-by.

Located in Esan North-East Local Government of Area of Edo State, Uromi is a peaceful town. But this Saturday, peace seemed to have eluded the suburb.

Suddenly, from nowhere, gunshots rented the air and everyone scampered for safety. Few seconds later, a man suspected to be a member of the Road Transport Employers Association of Nigeria was found lying dead in pool of blood.

What could have gone wrong? Was this another robbery incident? The community had experienced the Igarra bank robbery of November 3, which claimed innocent lives. They also had little to doubt,

especially as a commercial bank was located right in the heart of the market.

But this was no robbery. An angry and gun-wielding leader in one of the motor parks, identified as Onana Ofua, was out on a mission to kill his alleged enemies.

Perturbed by the ugly turn of events, the Chairman of RTEAN Unit I, Uromi, Mr. Philip Adams, had dashed to the Uromi divisional police station to inform the police of the incident. However, no sooner had he filed a report than he got the tragic news that sent chills down his spine – his third wife, Charity, had also been gunned down by the same suspect in front of his home.

SUNDAY PUNCH gathered that the late Ofua, said to be a bus driver and chairman of the Benin unit park, one of the motor parks in Uromi, had been admitted at the Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital, Irrua, after complaining of stomach ache. He was diagnosed to have suffered from typhoid and food poisoning. On hearing the news, he was said to have believed that he was poisoned. Later, he stormed out of the medical facility in a manner typical of a war scene.

Ofua was said to have gone home. He took his gun, suspected to be an AK47 rifle, and went on a hunt for persons whom he suspected to be behind his medical travail.

He shot six persons. The three dead persons were 42-year-old Charity Eduze; Clement Omozokpea and Sunday Osedianosen, a 61-year-old father of 10— while three others — Matthew Okoebor; General Secretary, RTEAN, Jacob Uzegbe and Sunday Eboigbe — sustained injuries.

Ofua didn't waste time after carrying out his mission. He fled to Ubiaja, in Esan South-West Local Government Area of Edo State. He met a police patrol team and he reportedly engaged them in shootout. This time, he didn't succeed— he was killed and his firearm recovered.

For Adams whose wife was killed by Ofua's bullet, shock remained the word in his household. Visibly ruffled by the incident, he said the event was unprecedented in the history of RTEAN in the area. Not only did he say his wife died instantly, he told our correspondent that the attack on her was a clear indication that he was Ofua's prime target.

He said, "That day, December 19, 2015, I was in a restaurant eating pounded yam when one Monday Black called me and asked whether I had heard what was happening and I replied in the negative. Then, he told me that his chairman, Onana, caused some damage at Irrua Specialist Hospital where he had

been admitted because he was not well. He told me that the deceased had forcefully removed the intravenous fluid being administered on him, as if he was running mad. As Black was narrating this; another person called to inform me that Onana came to the park and shot one Jacob and my in-law.”

According to him, he had to act fast and he sought police intervention. “I quickly ran to the police station to report. As I was narrating the story to the Divisional Police Officer, another person called me, saying that the killer went to my house, which was located along the road. He was said to have met my wife outside and then shot her. She died immediately. He also went to town and shot about three persons. I was at the station when his corpse was brought in. It’s sad that my wife was killed. I never believed that he could do such a thing because he had never insulted me. I didn’t know what came over him; but I know that he was hot-tempered.”

SUNDAY PUNCH gathered from unconfirmed sources that the deceased killer had been involved in a tussle over the leadership of one of the parks before he carried out the dastardly acts. But some members of the union said nothing of such was noticed. One of them, Monday Ehizokhai, who was late Ofua’s deputy, noted that he had a good working relationship with the deceased.

“I felt very bad and do not know what caused the problem. Nothing like this has ever happened before in this park and it remains a mystery to everybody. I am his deputy and we have been relating well. They (hospital staff) should have held him back. When he used his vehicle to destroy the gate, they should have gone after their patient to see what was happening,” he said.

The management of the teaching hospital, where Ofua was admitted, could not be reached for comments, as both the Chief Medical Director and the Public Relations Officer were said to have officially closed for the day, at about 6:30pm last Wednesday when our correspondent visited Uromi.

However, a source in the medical institution, who spoke on condition of anonymity, narrated that the late Ofua forced his way out of the hospital and rammed down the gate with his vehicle. This was after overpowering some doctors and security personnel who tried in vain to hold him down.

The source explained, “He took the car key from his wife and ran into his vehicle. Some doctors and security officers tried to hold him but he was a huge man and overpowered all of them. He drove very fast and passed through the gate, even when the iron barricade was still lowered. The gates were destroyed totally. I learnt he went into his house in the village, brought out a gun and started shooting people. I heard that his vomit and stool had black substances. I also heard that he knew that he was

going to die. So, he didn't want to die alone; he wanted to go with some people, and he achieved that."

The spokesman for the Edo State Police Command, Mr. Abiodun Osifo, said investigation was ongoing to unravel the circumstances surrounding the incident.

"It is true that a bus driver picked up his firearm and went on a shooting spree. He actually shot six persons. Three of them died while three are receiving treatment in a hospital. This happened about a week ago. I think it is a psychiatric case; investigation is on," Osifo added.

Copyright PUNCH.

All rights reserved. This material, and other digital content on this website, may not be reproduced, published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed in whole or in part without prior express written permission from PUNCH.

Contact: editor@punchng.com