

Policemen guzzle beer as gunmen kill 85-year-old Imam

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Kareem's house

Samson Folarin

Residents of Halleluyah Quaters in the Ibafo area of Ogun State have been thrown into mourning after some gunmen attacked the community and killed an 85-year-old Islamic cleric, Kareem Olaiya.

During the two hours raid of houses in the community on Monday, a landlord, Scott Odum, was also abducted after his property was looted.

One of his children, who begged the gunmen not to take him away, was hit with the butt of a gun.

Our correspondent, who visited the community on Monday, saw Kareem's corpse where it was laid

in a room, as sympathisers thronged the house.

Family members, who were just learning about the incident, broke down in tears, as cries of sorrow filled the air.

The footprints of the suspected militants were still visible in some of the places where they operated when *PUNCH Metro* visited.

Although the attack reportedly occurred around 2am, as of 12pm when our correspondent left, no security agent had visited the community.

PUNCH Metro observed some policemen sitting near an armoured tank marked, F-SARS, in front of the Ibafo Police Station, guzzling beer from bottles in three crates.

The policemen dropped the empty bottles in a spot close to the armoured tank.

A resident, Bode, who said four of the gunmen attacked his apartment, explained that they ordered him to lie down as they ransacked his room.

He said, "I was having a vigil with my wife when I observed some movements around the house. I initially thought they were local vigilantes, but immediately I sensed they were militants, I quickly switched off my lights.

"However, they found their way inside the house and threatened to kill me if I made any phone call.

"The second man pointed a gun at me and asked me to lie down; I complied. While they were ransacking my property, one of them saw a logo and said I was a policeman. I told them it had nothing to do with the police. I quickly showed them my ID card to debunk the claim."

PUNCH Metro learnt that the gunmen, who wore masks, spoke pidgin English.

One of the children of the late Islamic cleric, Abdulganiyu, said his father died from shock after the gunmen fired into the air.

He explained that the kidnappers had targeted Bode's landlord, whose house was opposite theirs,

adding that the landlord had left the community the previous day.

He said, “We were all asleep when we heard sporadic gunshots. Baba (Kareem) woke up from sleep and started panicking. He sat on a chair and soon slumped and died. He was killed by the shock of the sporadic gunshots.”

A relative of the landlord that was kidnapped in the community said the attack caught them unawares.

She said despite carting away money and phones, the gunmen still abducted Odum, an IT expert.

“They scaled the fence into the house and opened the door after breaking the glass window. They put guns to our heads during the whole operation, so I could not look at them. One of the children, who begged them, was hit with the butt of their gun,” she added.

PUNCH Metro was told that Odum’s wife had been hospitalised for about a week after suffering shock from a previous attack on the neighbourhood.

A resident, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said some landlords mobilised to stop the gunmen from escaping with Odum after the police failed to intervene.

“We expected them to take a particular route out of the community, and we had laid in ambush for them. Unfortunately, they took a different route,” she added.

A community leader wondered why the police refused to come to their aid, saying each time there was an attack, the police always left the community to its fate.

“The militants have been coming every day for the past three weeks. When they come, they burgle houses, abduct landlords and rape women. They kill our goats and chickens as well. We have been under siege without any help from the police.

“During this latest attack, we called the Ibafo Divisional Police Officer around 3am and he said he had alerted his men. Nobody has shown up till now (10.30am).

“The acting Inspector-General of Police said he had deployed a mobile police force to Ibafo, but

these men only watch over the police station and drink alcohol. They don't fight the militants.”

The Police Public Relations Officer, SP Muyiwa Adejobi, said, “The police are not aware of the attack. Let the complainant see the DPO.”

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Contact: editor@punchng.com