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# How cultists killed my son – Father of murdered ex-Eaglet Uzama

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***Alexander Okere and Idris Adesina***

The father of murdered former Golden Eaglets and Flying Eagles defender, Douglas Uzama, has disclosed to *Saturday PUNCH* how suspected cultists tricked his son away from home and killed him at a nearby bar in Benin City, the Edo State capital.

The 18-year-old Gombe United defender was killed on Thursday in Sakponba, an area notorious for the activities of cultists, while on a one-week holiday in Benin.

The left-back was a member of the 2015 Golden Eaglets team. He played in the qualifiers for the 2015 CAF U-17 Africa Cup of Nations in Niger, but did not make the final squads to the tournament and the Chile 2015 FIFA U-17 World Cup, where Nigeria won their fifth title.

The late footballer's father, Jacob Uzama, said he had left home on Thursday evening to their family house, only to be told 20 minutes later that Douglas had been shot dead.

Jacob said his son went out from their 14, Apostolic Street, Off Sakponba Road, after receiving a phone call from some friends. But the retired army personnel said on getting to a nearby bar to join his friends, two boys came in and shot Uzama at the back of his neck.

It was learnt that the footballer died instantly, as the same boys went further to kill two other people on the same street.

"I was not at home when the incident happened but I was told that Douglas' friends called him on phone and he went to meet them. When I got there, I met he was shot at the back of his head. His brother rushed him to Central Hospital but Douglas was dead before he got to hospital. We have deposited his corpse at a mortuary. We've also reported the matter to the police but we've not heard from them yet," Jacob stated.

However, when the Edo State Commissioner of Police, Haliru Gwandu, was contacted on the issue, he said the state police command was unaware of Uzama's death.

"I don't have any information about the killing of any footballer but the Edo State Police Command has been arresting suspected cultists over clashes in the Sakponba area of Benin City recently," Gwandu said.

According to an eyewitness, who pleaded anonymity for fear of being attacked by the cultists, the attack on the Edo State-born player was planned.

"Sakponba is notorious for the activities of cultists. It was a well-planned attack on Douglas. It's a cult-related incident but whether he was a cultist or they used him to get back at somebody else is what we don't know."

It's the second time a Premier League player would be killed in 2016. Shooting Stars' defender Izu Joseph was reportedly shot dead by soldiers in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, in October while also on holiday.

shot in the head by suspected armed robbers as he tried to get away from the gunmen.

Also in 2009, two defunct Ocean Boys players, Eniye Dennis and UbotoOchokoma, were shot dead in their home by suspected cultists, while sleeping.

Earlier, Igeniwari George, the younger brother of Nigeria legend Finidi George, died on September 9, 1995, from gunshot wounds during a Federation Cup match between his club Enugu Rangers and Stationery Stores at the Lekan Salami Stadium, Ibadan.

In a statement signed by TosinAkinde, Secretary, Edo State Council of the National Association of Nigeria Professional Footballers, the players union said, “Douglas is a dedicated player and his untimely death has thrown the entire football community in Benin into shock. The rate of killings of innocent footballers at their prime in Nigeria has reached an alarming stage and the union must seek justice this time around.

“Izu’s case is still fresh and we are yet to recover from the shock. Now we are mourning a promising young footballer, who has played for the national teams at the U-17 and U-20 categories.”

His club Gombe United lamented the loss of the young defender.

The rate of killings of innocent souls in Nigeria is reaching an alarming stage; we mourn the untimely and grim murder of Douglas Uzama. He nursed the dream of playing at the very top; for some thugs to brutally take his life at this stage of his career means the life of an ordinary Nigerian is at risk every day.

“We call on the security forces to hunt for Douglas Uzama’s murderers and bring them to book. They should be made to pay for this dastardly act and shall never be allowed to go scot free,” the club said in a statement.

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