

Gunmen kill corps member in Imo • UNILORIN graduate dies days to convocation

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Uwaoma-Oloriegbe Photo: Chidiebube Okeoma and Sodiq Oyeleke

Success Nwogu, Chidiebube Okeoma and Sodiq Oyeleke

Tragedy struck in Owerri, the Imo State capital, on Monday after yet-to-be identified gunmen shot dead a serving corps member, Ekene Uwaoma.

This is just as a graduate of Electrical Engineering, University of Ilorin, Miss Taofeeqah Oloriegbe, died on Monday – five days to her convocation.

PUNCH Metro learnt that the Imo incident happened around 8.30pm at Ama-wire Junction, when the corps member and his friend, identified simply as MacDonald, were returning to their residence.

Uwaoma, 23, was a 2016 graduate of History and International Studies from the Imo State University, Owerri, and was undertaking his one year National Youths Service Corps programme in Ogun State.

He hailed from Umudo-Anara, in the Isiala Mbano Local Government Area of the state and was the second son of his parents.

He was said to have come to the state to see his mother, Mrs. Mary Uwaoma, when he was murdered.

His friend, MacDonald, told our correspondent on the telephone on Tuesday that he was with the deceased when the gunmen waylaid them and demanded their mobile phones.

MacDonald said, “We were returning home from where we went to buy food. Suddenly, four boys bearing arms stopped and asked us to surrender our phones. I quickly gave them mine, but Ekene (Uwaoma) refused to surrender his phone.

“They started struggling and I ran away. They shot him on the chest and ran away. They also shot into the air to scare people away.”

MacDonald disclosed that the corps member was rushed to the Federal Medical Centre, Owerri, where doctors confirmed him dead.

“The gunmen didn’t go with his phone. It was a pity. This was the first time somebody was killed in my presence. I am heartbroken. His picture keeps appearing in my mind. I can’t bear it,” he added.

A family member, who did not want his name in print, told our correspondent that Uwaoma’s death had thrown his family and village into mourning, adding that the deceased’s mother had yet to recover from the shock.

The state Commissioner of Police, Chris Ezike, who confirmed the death to our correspondent, said the command had swung into action to apprehend the fleeing murderers.

In the UNILORIN incident, family and friends of Oloriegbe, a graduate of the institution, are mourning her death.

The lady, who finished with a Second Class (Upper Division), was preparing for her convocation before her death on Monday. The ceremony is to be held on Saturday.

Although information regarding the cause of her death was still sketchy as of the time of filing this report, friends of the deceased said she died after a brief illness.

“She only complained about having pains in her hand, but she later died,” one of her friends, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said.

The Public Relations Officer of the institution, Mr. Kunle Akogun, confirmed the death of the student through a text message.

He said, “The late Oloriegbe, a Second Class Upper graduate, was billed to graduate on Saturday at the 33rd convocation of the UNILORIN. She died on Monday after suddenly taking ill while preparing for her upcoming graduation. May her gentle soul rest in peace.”

The UNILORIN Students’ Union President, Mr. Adebisi Abimbola, described Oloriegbe’s death as shocking and painful. He said the deceased was a gentle, friendly and hard working student.

He said, “I became extremely sober when I heard of her death. We used to be in the same class. She was very jovial, friendly, liberal and decent.

“I pray that God grant her family the fortitude to bear the loss.”