

# Kidnappers kill African Church priest in botched rescue operation

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Ayeola

Samson Folarin

Suspected kidnappers have killed the chaplain to the Bishop of the African Church, Ondo Central Diocese, Revd. David Ayeola.

The gunmen shot Ayeola dead in a botched rescue operation after the church declined to pay the N100m ransom the kidnappers demanded.

The African Church had offered N500,000 instead.

*PUNCH Metro* learnt that the remains of the victim had been deposited in a morgue.

Our correspondent gathered that Ayeola, the bishop, Samuel Ojo; and the bishop's wife were travelling to Abeokuta, Ogun State, from Imojo Ekiti, Ekiti State, when they were waylaid by the gunmen on the road.

The bishop, his wife, Ayeola, and the driver of the car were said to have fled into the bush.

A source said, “While others escaped, the chaplain was caught and abducted by the gunmen.

“They later contacted the headquarters of the church at Akure and demanded N100m. The church, however, offered them N500,000, which they turned down.”

Another top leader of the African Church said the church’s leadership involved the Ekiti State Police Command in the rescue of the priest.

He explained that while trying to buy time with negotiation, the police also closed in on the hideout of the abductors.

“On Saturday, the police swooped on the hideout of the kidnappers and there was an exchange of gunfire between them.

“The police team was overpowered and the kidnappers decided to shoot the priest. He was shot in the side; they (kidnappers) left his corpse behind. The family has taken the body to the morgue,” he added.

When contacted, the Diocesan Public Relations Officer, Alex Akande, said he could not talk about the incident, adding that the church’s leadership would meet on Monday (today).

He said, “The case is with the police. I don’t want to divulge too much information because I need to get clearance from the church’s headquarters. We will be having a meeting tomorrow (Monday); maybe I can talk after that.”

*PUNCH Metro* learnt that Ayeola was not married and he had only recently finished from the seminary.

A check on his *Facebook* page showed that although he rarely used social media, he sometime waxed philosophical.

“People may say many things about you, but what you say about yourself matters most. I know I shall accomplish the purpose of God for my life in the land of the living in Jesus Name. Do have a happy night rest friends,” his last post read.

The Ekiti State Police Public Relations Officer, Adeyemi Ademola, confirmed the death.

He said, “Yesterday evening (Saturday), we received intelligence about where the reverend was being kept by the kidnappers. The police and some hunters went to rescue him. We discovered that the place was a very thick forest.

“When the kidnappers noticed that the police and the hunters were coming, they shot the reverend and escaped.

“We went after them for a while, but the team had to turn back when it was getting dark. This was to avoid endangering the lives of members of the team in a terrain that the kidnappers may be more familiar with. We took the reverend to a general hospital, but sadly, we lost him.”