

Rivers monarch's widow begs police to find husband's killers

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Christopher

Chukwudi Akasike, Port Harcourt

Mrs Rose Naene, the widow of the paramount ruler of Bere community in the Khana Local Government Area of Rivers State, Chief Christopher Naene, has called on the Nigeria Police to find her husband's killers and bring them to justice.

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The late Christopher, who was a retired army officer, and his brother, Lucky, were killed outside the monarch's residence on Tuesday.

It was gathered that the gunmen, numbering about 20, killed six other persons in the area during the early morning invasion of the community.

Narrating how her husband was killed on Wednesday, Rose told *PUNCH Metro* that the hoodlums had earlier dragged Lucky out of his house and forced him to show them his brother's residence.

Rose explained that she was startled when she saw the gunmen and decided to hide in a plantain plantation close to the house, not knowing that they had already seen her.

She stated, "When they saw me, they told me that it was not me that they were looking for. They asked me where my husband was, but I told them that he had gone to church.

"They were insistent and argued that he could not have gone to church without his car. It was at that point that they forced the door of the house opened and dragged him out before shooting him three times in the head.

“They also shot his younger brother, who later died. Before then, they had killed the two sons of a woman, who sells recharge cards not far from our house. They also killed one retired policeman, who was rushing to report the matter at the nearest police station.

“I told the gunmen to also kill me. What else am I doing in this world without my husband? But they said they did not come for me. I am calling on the police and other security agencies to fish out the killers of my husband.”

She said the bandits were not in a hurry to leave during the operation that lasted more than six hours, adding that policemen and soldiers, who later came, engaged the hoodlums in a gun battle.

The son of the late paramount ruler, Barry, said the entire Bere community had been deserted after the invasion by the unidentified gunmen.

Barry, who expressed shock that his father could be killed in such a gruesome manner after serving the country as a military officer for many years, stated that he was at a loss as to how to bury Christopher, because it was obvious that those who assassinated his father would come after him (Barry).

He said, “My father served as a Nigerian military officer in Bakassi, Osogbo, Ibadan and Onitsha, among others. He was a brilliant army officer. He was not killed while he was in Bakassi or even Sierra Leone on a peace mission, but was murdered in his village after retirement.

“My father would have been 70 years old on April 20. We were even organising a birthday party for him, not knowing that there was a plot to kill him.

“Since our uncle was also killed by the gunmen, I don’t know how to go to the village to bury my father without the gunmen looking for me. Every man in my community has fled to avoid being killed.”

He pointed out that his father might have been killed as a result of a chieftain tussle, which was decided in his favour by a High Court in 2017.

When contacted, the Rivers State Police Public Relations Officer, Nnamdi Omoni, confirmed the incident, but added that security operatives were on the trail of the killers.