

Friends, family demand justice as estate chairman kills footballer

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James and Stephen

Oluwatosin Omojuyigbe

The Chairman of the Victory Estate in the Iba area of Lagos State, Olu James, has allegedly shot dead a resident of the estate, Stephen Doubra.

Our correspondent learnt that the incident happened on Saturday, April 18, 2020, while the chairman and other residents were securing the estate against hoodlums.

PUNCH Metro gathered that James had an altercation with the victim, who held on to his shirt after allegedly hitting a helmet on him.

The chairman was said to have pulled out a gun and shot Stephen, a footballer, in the chest.

Stephen's sister, Helen Barro, who spoke with our correspondent, said James escaped with the victim on a motorcycle, but was later arrested by policemen from the Adoff Police Station.

She said, "The chairman was coming from one of our kinsmen's place, where he had gone to ask him to speak with his Ijaw brothers that they should only stay by their apartments for vigilante duty when he accosted Stephen and his cousin, who were coming in.

"An altercation ensued between the chairman and Stephen, and James hit Stephen's head with his helmet and the victim held his shirt and someone went to call the person, who the chairman had gone to report to, and while that one was begging him, James pulled out his gun and shot Stephen in the chest.

"When the chairman realised what he had done, he put Stephen on his motorcycle and escaped without anybody knowing his whereabouts.

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"Stephen's father reported the matter at the Iba Police Station when he did not see his son and police personnel came to the scene to investigate. It was not until Monday that we got to know the whereabouts of the chairman and Stephen, when we were taken to the State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department to see James, and the morgue, where Stephen was taken to.

"Stephen was a footballer, who was supposed to travel to Portugal, but it was the lockdown that made him to stay back. We want justice; we want the chairman to be prosecuted."

Stephen's friend, who identified himself simply as Babajide, alleged on his *Twitter* page that James had earlier threatened to kill the footballer on three separate occasions.

He tweeted, "*Prior to the day Steven was brutally murdered by a gunshot wound to the heart, Mr James on 3 occasions was said to have threatened to kill him, his exact words were 'I will kill you and bury you and no one would do anything'.*"

“The first occasion was in December 2019, Steven and his family during the cause of celebrating had their music too loud, this man who wasn’t even their neighbour went over to their house and turned off their generator...this led to a slight argument between him and Steven’s siblings.

“The second was at a scene when Mr Ojo accused 2 members of the estate of theft, tied them up and was hitting them with machetes. Residents at the estate came out to attest on the identity of the boys and also their innocence, among the crowd was Steven also who said, ‘I know these men, let them go, they aren’t thieves’. Mr James out of shame and anger made the life-threatening comment to Steven and everyone thought it was bluff.

“The 3rd was after a confrontation from the youths in the estate to disburse the 30 bags of rice and other relief items from the LG to the residents of the estate which Mr James held back to himself.

“Around 3.30am on Saturday, Steven after participating in the vigilante activity, decided to walk home with 2 of his other cousins who worked with him as a team during the guard activity, on his way back, Mr James, who had seen him pass with his cousins laid an ambush at him with 2 other vigilante partners who worked with him (Mr James).

“Steven’s other cousin who witnessed most of the altercation before fleeing the scene said, ‘He saw us on our way back and said, ehen una two...abi I don tell una say na me go kill una for this street’.

“Steven paying him no mind asked they kept going before Mr James screamed to the other two vigilante ‘hold them, hold them’ as they tried to grab Steven’s cousin, the guy punched grabber on the jaw and fled the scene leaving Steven who kept asking what his offence was.

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“Mr James who obviously had the intention of accusing Steven of something kept attacking him with the bike helmet he held in his hand...Steven was in awe as he was very familiar with the two other vigilante guys (who are currently on the run) and never Imagined they could do such.

“While he kept shouting ‘wetin be that? Ah ah, why? Wetin I do?’ The helmet broke through his head and he began to bleed...before Steven was eventually shot directly beneath his left breast, direct to Steven’s heart...”

The state Police Public Relations Officer, Bala Elkana, confirmed the arrest of the suspect, adding that the SCIID was investigating the incident.

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