

# Policemen chasing robber shot my 75-year-old mother relaxing on verandah – Delta woman

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*Policemen of ‘Operation Delta Safe’ who were on the trail of an alleged robber on Saturday, February 13, 2021, allegedly shot dead a 75-year-old woman, Okwuekwu Okolo, who was relaxing on the verandah of her house in Asaba, Delta State. The second daughter of the deceased, Mrs Marry Ogbe, speaks to MATTHEW OCHEI about the tragic incident*

*What is your name?*

My name is Marry Ogbe.

***You said your 75-year-old mother was recently shot dead by some policemen. How did it happen?***

Very early around 5am on Sunday (February 14, 2021), my younger brother, Nwafor, knocked on my door. I came out and I saw him crying. He said some policemen shot my 75-year-old mother. I asked him how. He said he was at his friend's house in the neighbourhood when he heard gunshots and he was running to the house when he was told that policemen had shot our mother who was in front of the house taking fresh air.

I shouted at him and asked why he was only telling me on Sunday morning about an incident that happened on Saturday night. I asked him where my mother was, he said she had been taken to the Federal Medical Centre, Asaba but the police did not allow him to come into the hospital.

So, alongside one of our relatives, Ngozi, we set out for the FMC. We did not even know that our mother was already dead. When we got the hospital, we asked for the ward our mother was, but one of the gatemen asked us, "You have not heard?" I asked him, "Heard what?" He then told us that our mother had been taken to Maduemezie mortuary.

We were angry. Someone was shot around 9pm on Saturday and it was not 6am on Sunday and she had been taken to the mortuary. We started crying and then went to the house of our eldest sister who is living at the back of stadium (in Asaba). When we got there she was not even aware of the incident, I told her that our mother is dead and narrated the incident to her.

Both of us immediately went to Area A Division Police Station. We met with the DPO, who started apologising to us, saying they were sorry, they did not intend to kill our mother and that they tried their best to make sure she survived but unfortunately she died.

The DPO told us that they chased some armed robbers from Ugbolu to Asaba when the incident happened. But my eldest sister told the DPO that their pleading would not bring back our mother. She told the DPO that our mother belongs to the Umuoji Quarters in Asaba community and that, as women, we lacked the capacity to discuss with them.

***What did you do next?***

My sister and I have gone back to the police station twice afterwards. But the police have not come here till now (Thursday, February 18). It is very bad that they stay there in their station, begging us to forgive their action. A woman who was at her house resting was just shot dead by the police. It is very painful.

***What does the family plan to do?***

As I said earlier, I have an elder sister and my mother has a younger brother. It is my mother's younger brother who will inform the villagers about the incident. It is after then that we will know the next step to take.

***How do you feel that your 75-year-old mother was shot dead in her house by policemen?***

I feel so sad. It is very painful. It is bad and inhuman for Nigerian policemen to come to somebody's house and kill her. Why would they be shooting in that manner in the name of chasing an armed robber? It means that they were not trained.

Only recently, a woman was killed by Operation Delta Hawk's stray bullet and then it was my mother, who knows who will be the next victim?

And to show how inhuman they are, after shooting my mother, instead of rushing her immediately to the hospital, the policemen were threatening to shoot the tenants who called their attention to the harm they had done. I just thank God it was not my younger brother, who challenged them, they would have labelled him one of the robbers they were chasing. Imagine, they threatened my younger brother that if he did not comport himself, he would "receive his own (bullet)".

## Mama was shot in two places –Eyewitness

***What is your name and who are you to the deceased?***

My name is Chidimma and I am Mama's tenant here at No. 219 Nnebisi road, Asaba

***Where were you when the incident happened?***

I was at home; as a matter of fact, I was with her at the front on the house taking fresh air.

***What actually happened?***

We were in the front of the house taking fresh air. I sat close to mama. Then all of a sudden, we heard noises and then saw three speeding vehicles, one Highlander SUV, one red car and police Hilux pick-up. The Highlander SUV blocked the red car, so, the three vehicles stopped. Then a policeman raised his gun up through the window of the SUV and began shooting. From the Hilux pick-up, other policemen jumped out and started shooting too.

In the confusion, we were trying to run inside the house. Then I heard Mama shouting my name, saying, “Chidimma, these people have killed me!” I thought she was just panicking, like the rest of us. So, I rushed back to her and told her to let us run inside the house. As I was trying to help her to her feet, I didn’t realise that she had been shot. She managed to adjust her wrapper and she was holding her ribs. She went inside by herself while I rushed in through another door. But when I got inside, I saw her on the floor in a pool of blood. So, I started shouting, calling for help.

***When happened thereafter?***

Immediately, my two sisters and I ran out of the gate and started shouting, telling the policemen, “You people have killed Mama!” But they pointed guns at us and threatened to shoot us if we did not go back inside. But one of my sisters ignored their threat and walked towards them, shouting, “Mama is lying helpless there! You have killed Mama.” They pointed their guns at her and my sister ran back into the house.

Then, one of our neighbours, a man, summoned courage and jumped outside, trying to stop a keke (commercial tricycle) to take Mama to the hospital. It was then that one of the policemen, I believed he was the DPO, said, “Oh! It’s that old mama.” Then he came inside and saw mama lying in a pool of blood. He then ordered the driver of the red car they were chasing to carry Mama into his car and then they all drove to the Federal Medical Centre, Asaba.

***Did any of you follow them to the hospital?***

It was our neighbour, the man, who followed them to the hospital. But we were calling him on phone to monitor the situation. He told us when they arrived at the hospital but he said he was not allowed to enter the hospital. He was outside the hospital all night.

***What part of the body did the bullet hit Mama?***

She held her ribs as she was shouting, “Dem don kill me.” We later also saw that another bullet passed through her chest. She was shot in two places.

***What time did the incident happen?***

It happened around 9pm. We were outside taking fresh air, as we normally do whenever there is power outage. Sometimes Mama would spread her mat on the floor but that night she sat on a chair. The bullet pierced through the plastic chair and hit her. The entire house, from the gate, to the wall, to the roof, is riddled with bullets. It was like war that night.

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