

# Gunmen kill Imo businessman, kidnap priests, Rivers monarch

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Imo State CP, Barde

A legal practitioner, Uche Ejimonye, has narrated how gunmen allegedly kidnapped two Catholic priests after shooting his father-in-law, Valentine Enwerem, dead in Imo State.

The lawyer, in a statement obtained by our correspondent in Owerri, on Monday, said Enwerem's killers trailed him from Amaraku, in the Isiala Mbano Local Government Area of the state, to Orji where his father-in-law and the two priests ran into a gridlock.

Ejimonye said the criminals shot his father-in-law and immediately abducted the two catholic priests he was conveying to a destination on Friday evening.

The statement read in part, "I wish to announce the demise and sudden death of my father-in-law, Mr Valentine Enwere, known as Oga Val, as popularly known at the Orji mechanic village.

"He was shot dead by kidnappers at Orji after fleeing from them from Amaraku to Owerri and surviving the series of gunshots at his vehicle.

"He was caught up in the gridlock at Orji but on attempting to escape after coming down from his vehicle, he was shot five times at his back.

"The kidnappers then abducted the two Rev. Fathers that were with him in the car and zoomed off. Attempts by passersby to rescue him by taking him to the hospital proved abortive as he died on the way."

Contacted by our correspondent for further details, the lawyer said that the incident was reported at the Anti-Kidnaping Unit of the state police command in Owerri.

The Director of Communications, Owerri Catholic Archdiocese, Rev. Father Raymond Ogu, said the archdiocese had yet to receive any report about the attack as of the time of filing this report.

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The state Police Public Relations Officer, Micheal Abattam, had yet to respond to an inquiry concerning the incident as of the time this report was filed.

In a related development, a monarch and Chairman of the Abissa Council of Chiefs in Akuku-Toru Local Government Area of Rivers State, High Chief Matthew Opoto, has been kidnapped by gunmen.

Opoto and some of his council of chiefs were said to be on the way to their community when the gunmen driving in speed boats, intercepted the boat they were in.

After Opoto was identified, it was gathered that the gunmen dragged him into one of their boats and whisked him away.

A native of the area, Minaibiye Dolphin, who confirmed the incident to newsmen in Port Harcourt, said the monarch was few minutes to his destination when the gunmen struck.

He said, “The chairman of Abissa council of chiefs, High Chief Mathew Opito, was travelling with some of his chiefs and about five minutes to arrive the community, gunmen came in speed boats, identified him and took him away. We have no information about him.”

Contacted, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Grace Iringe-Koko, said a thorough investigation had begun to rescue the monarch.

“Yes, we are aware. We are making frantic efforts to ensure his early release as well as to apprehend the abductors,” Iringe-Koko said.