

Gunmen kill Kogi monarch as guards flee

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By Gbenga Odogun

Onu Itama, HRH, Chief Job Shagari Ebijego and Ohuoha

The Onu Itama, HRH, Chief Job Shagari Ebijego, has been allegedly assassinated by unknown gunmen near his palace in the Itama community, Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State.

A family source told *Arewa PUNCH* that the hired assassins rained bullets on the monarch while he was taking a stroll within his palace compound around 9.00 pm. when the sporadic shooting started.

The source pointed out that subjects of the late traditional ruler and his personal guards could not immediately come out to ascertain what was happening as they all scampered to safety until the shooting ceased and the assassins fled the scene on their motorcycle to an unknown destination.

Our correspondent further gathered that the lifeless body of the traditional ruler was later found by the roadside very close to his palace in the community.

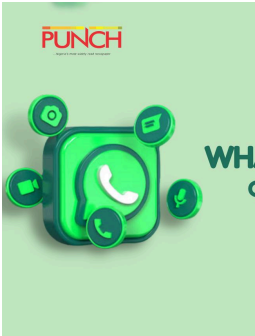


Another source told *Arewa PUNCH* that even though palace sources said they could not readily ascertain the route through which the assassins came from, it was however revealed that the late Onu Itama had been embroiled in a series of chieftaincy tussles and land dispute matters with some groups of people in the community since his assumption of office.

The Itama community, which has been thrown into mourning since the sad incident took place, started witnessing another scene of the uprising as arsonists have now taken over the community.

Aggrieved by the tragic incident, youths in the community woke up on Tuesday morning and started burning houses and destroying the property of those suspected to be behind the brutal murder of the community chief.

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Police personnel were immediately drafted from the Egume Divisional Police Office along with some military personnel from the Nigerian Army to stay on guard duty in the community and keep the peace.

Still, no fewer than 12 irate youths have been arrested by the combined forces keeping the peace, even as many residents have fled the town.

Our correspondent further reports that the hitherto bubbling community was totally deserted at the time *Arewa PUNCH* visited the Itama community.

A resident of the community who volunteered to speak with our correspondent on condition of anonymity from her hiding place

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disclosed that many of the residents and visitors took to their heels for fear of arrest or being targeted by the rampaging angry youths.

Some neighbouring communities like Elubi, Acharu, and Egume have suddenly become their refugee camps.

It was further reliably gathered that another group of irate youths stormed the Itama community on Tuesday night and looted large quantities of red palm oil, food items, and property worth thousands of naira.

The murdered monarch was, until his death, highly respected and revered for his great sense of wisdom, and justice, just as he was also said to be an unbiased umpire who was dedicated to the well-being of his people.

His untimely death has sent shockwaves across the region, with many calling for swift action to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Before the late Shagari Ebijego retired and ascended the throne of the Onu Itama community, he was a police officer at the Kaduna Police Command in Kaduna State.

When contacted, the Divisional Police Officer, Egume Pere, said the situation was partially calm, adding that he had sent more personnel to the area. So far, 12 people have been arrested in connection with the unrest preparatory to their relocation to the Lokoja Headquarters of the Police Command.

Asked to speak on the killing of the monarch, Pere said he was not in a position to speak on the deceased murder

All efforts to contact the Kogi State Police Command Public Relations Officer, SP. I Williams Aya failed as he did not pick up his calls.

He also did not respond to WhatsApp messages sent to him as of the time of filing this report.

| Gbenga Odogun

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