

Hoodlums attack Ondo Baale, kill assistant over chieftaincy tussle

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| Uthman Salami and Hiradat Hassan

| Hoodlums

A leadership crisis in Ugbonla, a community in Ilaje Local Government Area of Ondo State, has resulted in the tragic killing of the assistant secretary of the community, Idowu Joel Lowo.

PUNCH Metro learnt on Wednesday that hoodlums allegedly attacked Lowo with weapons, leading to his death, while the community's Baale, Chief Adebowale Ebiwano, narrowly escaped.

Our correspondent gathered that the violence erupted on February 13, 2025, around 8:00 a.m. when four armed men, wielding cutlasses, were spotted near Chief Ebiwano's residence.

Recalling the incident, Ebiwano told PUNCH Metro on Wednesday, "At first, I assumed they were carrying cutlasses in preparation for our upcoming anniversary, but the situation quickly escalated.

He explained that the mob gathered, chanting that they no longer wanted a Baale in the community because the king who appointed him had passed away.

“They said anyone who still called himself Baale would be beaten. Fortunately, they didn’t know I had already left my house,” he said.

As the mob stormed his residence and found it empty, our correspondent learnt that they allegedly vandalised the house, destroyed vehicles, and looted money.

“We hid under a bed while I kept calling the police for help,” he continued. “To my shock, they told me they had no fuel in their vehicles. I even promised to double whatever amount they needed, but still, no help came.”

Ebiwano recounted that he asked his sister, who lived near the police station, to provide money for fuel, yet officers claimed they were waiting for orders from their superior.

Meanwhile, the assailants allegedly continued their destruction, he claimed.

During the rampage, the attackers allegedly caught Lowo and brutally assaulted him. “They clubbed him with planks filled with nails, and some used cutlasses,” Ebiwano said.

Our correspondent learnt that Iranlowo later died in the hospital.

When the police eventually arrived and arrested three suspects, Ebiwano lamented that they were later released.

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Lowo's wife, Olajumoke Iranlowo, who had recently given birth, now faces an uncertain future with her five children.

"My husband was killed in Ugbonla. I saw the video of what they did to him," she said, sobbing on the phone on Wednesday.

The grieving widow alleged that her husband had been repeatedly threatened because of his support for the Baale.

"They once poured salt in his car as a warning. I know the people who killed him," she added.

She expressed frustration over the handling of the case.

She stated, "I heard the suspects were arrested but later released. I want justice, but I don't like how the government is handling this matter. My husband is gone, and I have no money to take care of our children. Please, don't let me suffer."

Reacting to the situation, the spokesperson for the Ondo State Police Command, Ibukun Odunlami, advised the aggrieved parties to formally petition the Commissioner of Police if they felt the case was not properly handled.

She said, "I don't think there is anything the police will not attend to, and if the Baale feels aggrieved that the issue has not been properly attended to, he should write a petition to the Commissioner of Police.

"I don't understand why it should be the journalist asking me if we were aware of it, since he feels like the case has not been properly attended to; the institution has an organogram.

"There is an area command in that area that he can write a petition to, and if he's still not satisfied, he should write to the office of the Commissioner of Police."

Some communities in Ondo State have faced a wave of violence in recent times, grappling with incidents of banditry and attacks by suspected Fulani herdsmen.

Earlier this month, gunmen invaded several villages, including Aba Alajido, Aba Sunday, Aba Pastor, and Ademekun.

Reports indicate that the attacks left many dead, forcing residents to flee their homes in fear.