

NEWS PLUS

Kogi traditional ruler recounts ordeal in kidnapers' hands

■ Says: 'They tied my hands and legs, tortured me till I became unconscious'

Yes, I did it to avenge for my father – Gang leader

FROM EMMANUEL ADEYEMI, LOKOJA

It a high drama played out recently at the Kogi State Police Command when a traditional ruler in the state, Chief Simon Shaibu, the *Onu of Ejule*, narrated how he was kidnapped and tortured to stupor. Everyone watched with shock as the kidnap suspect, one Kabiru Bala, aka Okwor, looked straight into the monarch's eyes and said: "yes I did so to avenge for my father."

The traditional ruler who said he was abducted twice within three months by Okwor, a notorious kidnapper and armed robbery suspect, narrated almost in tears how the hoodlums desecrated his revered throne and brought untold hardship to him and his entire family.

According to the royal father, the hoodlums first invaded his palace, last year in the dead of the night and started shooting sporadically.

"They came to my room and threatened to kill me unless I followed them; they took me into a waiting vehicle, tied my hand and leg and covered my face and drove me into a thick forest where I was tortured. "For days, these boys treated me like cheap criminal and gave me the worst embarrassment of my life, but I later managed to escape from the 'lions' den' by divine arrangement

"However, about three months later, these terrible boys came back again. Led by Okwor, they again dragged me from my palace and forced me into a waiting vehicle and were taking to an unknown destination when the vehicle we were traveling in had a crash.

"Two of the boys died instantly as a result of the fatal accident. I thank God I was unhurt, but the gang leader who was equally unhurt again dragged me out of the vehicle and quickly arranged for an



• Okwor

okada which carried me with the gang leader sitting at my back to a thick forest. "I thank God, the police and community elders came to my rescue. If not the quick intervention of the police I would have been dead by now because they had already concluded to slaughter me, but God dispatched his angels in human form to rescue me," he said.

While speaking with our correspondent, Okwor, rather than being remorseful boasted: "yes I kidnapped the traditional ruler because I wanted to avenge for my father. He took my father's land; he can not do that and go scot-free unless I'm not alive," he announced to the consternation of everyone present.

The state Commissioner of Police, Seidu Madawaki, who said Okwor had been on the wanted list of the police for the past three years, noted that the prime and his notorious gang members were the brain behind several kidnap incidents, rape, murder and robbery attacks in recent time in the state.

He said Okwor first started as a political thug to some powerful politicians in Igala land before he graduated into a hardened criminal. Specifically, he said the suspect with his gang sometime in 2008, snatched nine vehicles belonging to some councilors in Ofu Local Government Area of the state and collected three million naira as 'settlement fee' before he could release the vehicles.

Again the CP alleged that Okwor and his gang in October 2009, set ablaze one Franco Hotel in Ejule owned by one Chief Akwu Obaje who was the former *Ogohi of Ejule* for no just cause. He further alleged that the suspect and his gang sometime in November 2009 invaded Akpagidigbo and Umomi villages, killing three people namely: Timothy John, Samuel Ibrahim and Solomon Andrew without any provocation.

The police boss who described Okwor as one of the terrible criminals in the state equally alleged that the suspect and



• Madawaki, Kogi CP

his gang sometime in 2009 invaded the venue of a marriage ceremony in Ofante Emajo village and killed one Yunusa Moses.

Madawaki who gave the names of several people who were allegedly killed by Okwor and his gang members, also said there were at least 10 cases hanging on the neck of the notorious criminal, saying eagle-eyed detectives spotted and arrested him at the Maigumeri barracks, Lokoja recently when he went to attempt enlist into the Army recruitment exercise

While investigations into Okwor's case were still going on, the police boss stated that he and his gang members in Ejule launched a reprisal attack on a detachment of SARS detectives stationed at Ofu Local Government last week. He said the police in a fierce gun battle killed two members of the gang and arrested some. He said as soon as the police conclude their investigations, Okwor and some of his gang members would be charged to court.



• Chief Shuaibu