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## Boy, 8, abducted from church, dies in kidnappers' den

Our Reporter

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FROM NGOZI UWUJARE

Eight-year-old Saint Brown who was abducted from Foundation Faith Church, Elekahia, during a crusade programme at the Liberation Stadium in Port Harcourt, Rivers State has died in the custody of his kidnappers.

He was held for one month by the kidnappers, during which he took ill. As *Sunday Sun* gathered, after abducting the boy, the kidnappers called his mother and demanded that N200,000 be paid as ransom and the family complied.

Bouyed by that 'success', greed drove them to ask for N300,000 more. At this point, the family called in the police who took charge of the negotiation with the intent to smoke out the kidnappers. With the help of providence, the kidnappers walked into a trap set by the Commander of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad of the Rivers State Police Command led by Supol Tunji Disu.

Through phone conversations, the head of the anti-kidnapping unit of SARS, Supol Edward Shadar (DSP) was able to pinpoint the whereabouts of the leader of the kidnappers, Uwo Ebikwu, and he was arrested. Seeing that his cookie had crumbled, he sang like a canary and told police interrogators all he knew.

He said: "It was Saturday Olodi who brought the business. I was in the village when he called that we should kidnap his sister's son, because she was very stingy and had not been giving him money. So we went to the church where the sister was attending a crusade. It was there that we kidnapped the child. Then we bought a Glo SIM (which I used to call the sister after kidnapping the child," he said.

Ebikwu who hails from Ahoada East Local Government Area, Rivers State explained that the

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gang had wanted to ask for N2million ransom, but he prevailed on them to go for a lower amount.

"We demanded for N400,000. I was the one talking with the family. I collected the N200,000 ransom that was paid by the family. When the boy was with us, Saturday Olodi, was bringing food for the child. The child was kept in the uncompleted building of my brother. When the child became sick, I called the mother and told her the child was sick. The child was in our custody for over a month. When I told my gang members that we should release the child, they refused. I couldn't share any money with them. I had to leave the child in the custody of Saturday Olodi and Felix Thursday," he said.

The information Ebikwu provided led to the arrest of his accomplices, Saturday Olodi, who hails from Ahoada West Local Government Area and Thursday Felix. In an interview held at the headquarters of the Rivers State Police Command, Olodi told *Sunday Sun*: "I know that they kidnapped my sister's eight-year-old son. But I don't know about how the child died and I don't know what happened to him. I was arrested after the Anti-Kidnapping Squad arrested Uwo Ebikwu. I was arrested because of my telephone conversation with him."

A member of the boy's family acknowledged that the kidnappers were first paid N200,000. "Later they demanded N300,000 ransom. We did not pay and decided to report the case to the Anti-Kidnapping Unit of the Command. The kidnappers told us that the child was sick. We pleaded with them to release him, but they refused until the child died in their custody," the family member said.

Following the arrest of the kidnappers, the corpse of the little boy was recovered. Rivers State police authorities have given assurance that the suspects would be charged to court.

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