



Vigilantes beat sick man to death

FROM GEORGE
ONYEJIUWA, OWERRI

The family of Akunbuoh of Ndi Okwu - Owerreri Aberi in Orlu council area of Imo has been thrown into grief following the brutal murder of their son, Godwin Akunbuoh, who was beaten to death by some members of a vigilante group from Isiala Amaifeke also in Orlu council area of the state for allegedly attempting to steal a motorcycle.

Sunday Sun reliably gathered that one Chief Jonathan Okeke and four others who are now cooling their heels in the cell of the State Criminal Investigation Department of the Imo state Police Command, had instigated the attack on the deceased apparently having seen him wandering around about 10.30 pm, not knowing his health challenges. It was also learnt that Chief Okeke and Victor Chukwudalu and Ifeanyi had attacked the deceased with cudgels and stabbed him severally with knives before dragging him to the office of the Vigilante in Isiala Amaifeke branding the deceased a motorcycle thief.

Sunday Sun learnt further that the late Godwin, 34 who was preparing to travel back to Spain after spending about two years in the state had suddenly taken ill on Saturday, March 15, 2014 and was rushed to Ndukwu Hospital

at Amaifeke Orlu where he was supposed to be treated for typhoid and malaria. But when further test was carried out on him it was discovered that the deceased had also been afflicted with cerebral malaria and was promptly admitted that night and was placed medication.

However, the following morning the wife, Mrs. Ifunanya who had slept in a separate room with her two little kids had gone to check on the husband and when she could not find him, she inquired from the nurse on duty who simply told her that her husband was seen scaling the fence of the hospital the previous night. Alarmed, the hapless woman became apprehensive wondering how a sick man could have scaled the fence of the hospital without the security guards stopping him.

Speaking amid sobs, Mrs Ifunanya Akunbuoh who lamented that she had suddenly become a widow disclosed that, "on Saturday, March 15, I accompanied my husband's elder brother Simon who took my husband to Ndukwu Hospital at Amaifeke because he had typhoid and malaria and when we got to the hospital, after further examination by the Dr. Ndukwu it was discovered that my husband actually had cerebral malaria and he was immediately admitted and was placed on a medication. When the elder brother left that night I had to

stay back, but because I came with my two little kids I had to sleep in a separate room.

She stated further that the next day, being Sunday morning, she went to check on her husband but she was told by one of the nurses who was on duty that the husband was seen scaling the hospital fence the previous night.

"At that moment, I was gripped with fear and tried his cellphone and when it rang a strange voice answered. I told the person to give the phone to my husband, it was then I was asked to come to the palace of the traditional ruler of Isiala Amaifeke with the family members of my husband. It was then that I knew that something bad had happened to my husband. I quickly informed his elder brother Simon who rushed down to the hospital with other members of the family to inquire from the nurses how a patient under their care could leave the hospital premises without their knowledge.

"When we got to the traditional ruler's palace we were again asked to go to the divisional police station at Amaifeke and the police directed us to go to the teaching hospital in Orlu, where we saw the dead body of my husband with several stab wounds on his body. The police informed us that they had already arrested the five suspects including

Chief Jonathan Okeke, who was the principal suspect in the murder of my husband."

Speaking with *Sunday Sun*, the deceased's elder brother, Simon said the police had arrested five of the suspects while the sixth suspect is now at large. He, however, insisted that the allegation that his brother was killed because he tried to steal a motorcycle was false and that it was not possible for a person in his health condition to steal a motorcycle.

"I am from this Orlu local government even though am not from Isiala Amaifeke community. We all know how hostile they are to people who are not from their area because this would not be the first time their so called vigilante members would be killing innocent people and claiming that they are robbers, because the youths of Isiala Amaifeke are notorious for harassing and beating strangers whenever it is past nine in the night in the name that they are vigilante people. Now, if the members of the vigilante claimed that a person is a robber, are they not supposed to take the person to the police station? Godwin was already processing his travel documents to go back to Spain before this incident. These people will not go scot free this time around because this is not how other vigilante groups operate in other communities."

But Okwudili Okafor, one of the suspects being held by the police disclosed to *Sunday Sun* that he was not aware of what had happened until Chief Jonathan Okeke and some of the youths from the community brought the deceased to the vigilante office in the middle of the night that they have a robber and requested him to notify the Eze who was supposed to inform the police.

"I was in our office that night when Chief Jonathan Okeke, Victor Chukwudalu, Ifeanyi Enesime and Abumike and some youths of the community dragged a young man who I later found out was Godwin from the neighbouring town of Ndi Okwuonu - Owere Aberi that the man was caught trying to steal a motorcycle and when I looked at him I told them that the man was already dead, but Chief Jonathan Okeke asked me to inform the Eze of the community and the police which I did. So I had no hand in the death of the man," he insisted.

Meanwhile, the Imo State police command spokesperson, Joy Elemoko (SP) said that the suspects were already in detention and would be charged to court after the police had concluded their investigation. She maintained that members of vigilance groups who took the law into their hands would face the consequences of their action.