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Ritual killings cause panic in Enugu



By [Our Reporter](#) on November 15, 2014 [National](#)

■ Women run for safety, seek divine intervention

FROM ALOYSIUS ATTAH (PRINCEMMY@YAHOO.COM)

Who killed Hillary Ali and Cecilia Ijah before dumping their bodies in a local water tank? That is the question presently agitating the minds of Aji people in Enugu- Ezike, Igbo- Eze North Local Government Area of Enugu State.

For some time now, a circle of evil acts has enveloped Enugu –Ezike hitherto known for its hospitable nature, peace and production of local palm wine widely sought after across different parts of Nigeria.

From the suspected ritual killing of Mabel Udaya, Ogbonna Ossai and his pregnant wife in Okpo community, the evil train swept through Umuagama community where a 35-year-old lady, Ngozi Ezech was murdered and vital body parts taken away.

While the police made a breakthrough in apprehending Ngozi's suspected killers, the killers sneaked into Eke Ozzi market in Ogrute community and in a space of one month, two mad men were mowed down in the dead of the night and their body parts also allegedly taken away.

In September, the peace and tranquility of Aji community was shattered when the lifeless body of Hillary Ali was discovered in a water tank inside his father's compound in Umuodeje area.

Hillary, about 35-year-old was a dealer in curtain fabric at the popular Tejuosho market, Lagos. Seriously searching for a wife before his tragic death, sources told *Saturday Sun*

Amidst tears and anguish, Hillary's remains were eventually buried in his uncompleted building very close to the father's

compound as the family is now looking unto God to reveal the mystery behind his painful death. His mother Roseline Ali Nwa Apeh told *Saturday Sun* that Hillary's death has shattered her life and the more she thinks about it, the more she gets confused.

Few days after Hillary's one month remembrance ceremony, tragedy struck again on October 2, 2014, few metres away from Hillary's compound. This time, it was the lifeless body of Cecilia Ijah that was discovered in another tank beside her compound after searching for her for two days.

Cecilia Ijah was a widow with eight children. Probably in her late 60s, she was married to the late Linus Ijah of Ijah Onoja family in Umuodeje. Her first son, Augustine, who aspired to be a catholic priest, slumped and died at Holy Ghost Novitiate, Awomamma, Imo State several years ago and she struggled all through to raise the remaining children.

According to the head of the family, Sylvester Ijah, who spoke to *Saturday Sun*, her body was discovered when he went into the compound to ask after her when he didn't see any sign of her in the compound for two days.

"My house is separated from hers but I normally pass through her compound when I'm going out. She lived alone because all her children are already out in search of greener pastures. So, when I noticed that the compound was not swept for two days, I breezed into the house and called her but no response. When I came back that day and called out and she didn't respond again, I entered her room and noticed it was open. It was later that Godwin Arji's wife, who went to fetch water in their tank, raised the alarm that she saw her body inside. When we came, we now entered her room and saw blood stains before calling for help.

"When people came and after reporting to the police, her body was brought out from the tank and on close examination, we saw a deep wound on one side of her head confirming that she was killed and thrown into the tank", he said.

When the reporter visited the compound last week, the evidence of how she was murdered was still intact. The wheel barrow with which she was conveyed to the tank by her killers was still there. The killers in trying to make it look like she drowned dropped her flashlight and slippers behind the tank while the disposable gloves used by the doctor for examination when she was taken out of the tank was also seen.

Who did it?

Speaking to *Saturday Sun*, the deceased's first son, Dozie Ijah, an Abuja-based businessman said he is helpless over the situation. He said he cannot point a finger at anybody presently for the fear of his own life. He noted that the family has been facing both spiritual and physical warfare but he cannot say who did this or that because he was only called on phone when the incident happened.

But sources in the community told *Saturday Sun* that while police are investigating the incident, they should beam their searchlight on the extended family members. A source, who craved anonymity, told the reporter that the late Cecilia's children have been facing persecution in the past from the relatives of their father. They pointed out that attempts made in the past by Dozie to free the family from bondage by trying to cut an alleged evil tree in the compound which has been allegedly the source of misfortune in the family was resisted vehemently by his uncles to the extent that they nearly killed him.

When *Saturday Sun* took up the issue with Sylvester and Anthony Ijah, they flatly denied anything like that. Sylvester said that they only had issues with Dozie because he wanted to cut the Akpu tree without due process because the tree is an economic tree.

The younger brother, Anthony Ijah, who spoke on phone to *Saturday Sun* from his Enugu base, said that people should not distort facts to score some points. He noted that their late patriarch, Ijah Onoja was a great man whose exploits were even documented by historians including the Akpu he owned. He said that the tree is almost 100 years old while people should be more concerned on how to unravel the circumstances surrounding Madam Cecilia's death other than bringing confusion.

Another member of the family, Eugene Ijah, while speaking to *Saturday Sun*, invoked Holy Ghost Fire on anybody who is fuelling suspicion among the family members. He said that it was his wife, Jacinta that called him on phone when the incident happened while he was on the way to Ogrute and they had to follow the whole process since then. He said the onus is on the security agencies to unravel the circumstances surrounding the death and ensure that the perpetrators are brought to book.

Women in search of solution

While it may prove a hard nut to crack by the police in unravelling those behind the strange deaths, the Catholic Women Organisation, Immaculate Heart Parish, Aji has decided to go spiritual. The Chairlady of the CWO, Mrs. Esther Ezeja, in an emotion-laden voice said that the death of Cecilia would be the end of mysterious killings in Enugu-Ezike. She noted that the deceased was the first to come for morning masses and the last to leave the church daily because she gave herself a self-appointed task of cleaning the grotto of the Blessed Virgin Mary every day.

While rallying the women to intensify prayers for God's intervention in the peoples plight, the catholic women invited for assistance, Rev. Sr. Martina Oforka, a mystic nun that has wrought exploits in Enugu- Ezike town in the past .

Sister Martina was at the church last Sunday. She visited the homestead of the murdered woman and after a meeting with the women, they mapped out several strategies on how to deal with not only the present case but a continued synergy with other women from different communities like Inyi, Okpo and Igogoro that rose in the past and stopped the rising wave of killings in their communities.

"The whole Catholic mothers must be united in this task. We must not involve charms or deities in this, rather our power should come from our knees through strategic prayers. We must also control our tongues in this and I assure you that the blood of this widow will haunt her killers forever. We should begin to ask questions-what has the traditional ruler of the community, the politicians in power and the council of elders done about these heinous crimes? We are going to visit their homes and repeat the same questions and demand answers because enough is enough", Sister Martina said.

The Enugu State Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Ebere Amarizu confirmed that the Divisional Police Officer in charge of Ogrute Division, had sent all the reports into the command crime diary but no arrests have been made so far while investigations are ongoing.

As at the time of filing this report, *Saturday Sun* gathered that another woman identified as Nwaeleugwu Ali nwa Azegba has been killed in a similar circumstance in Umuopu, a neighbouring community to Aji. In her own case, the assailants killed her and poured the contents of her foodstuffs on her before dropping the pot on her head and left the lifeless body on the ground.

This has led to panic in the community while mothers whose children are no more at home now dread staying alone since no one knows who is next. Some residents are already suggesting that the 2015 general elections may be the cause of the killings across the affected Enugu communities.

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