

How 74-year-old Lagos first-class monarch was kidnapped

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• Gunmen shot wife, guard, driver, others while abducting Iba ruler, witnesses say

By Gabriel Dike

SADNESS, confusion and anxiety currently pervade Iba community in Lagos, following a daring abduction of the town's royal father.

Oba Yushau Goriola Oseni, the 74-year-old first-class monarch and Oniba of Iba in Iba Local Council Development Area of Lagos State, was kidnapped by gunmen on Saturday night in his palace. The incident happened about 8pm.

Several witnesses said the kidnappers, who were about six in number, stormed the palace in the cover of darkness and abducted Oba Oseni in the presence of his wives, children, driver, relations and security men.

Their account of the incident was corroborated by one of the Oba's wives as well as his son.

When Daily Sun visited the palace and the community, the abduction of the monarch was the subject of discussion, even as visitors thronged the palace to confirm the news and also condole with the royal family.

Security agents drawn from OP MESA, Federal Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), regular police and local vigilantes have taken over the community, seeking any clue that could aid investigations. One armoured tank was stationed at the Aji Roundabout close to the palace.

Among the early callers at the palace were the Lagos State Deputy Governor, Dr. (Mrs.) Idiat Adebule; former Commissioner for Rural Development, Mr. Cornelius Ojelabi; several traditional rulers, Christian and Muslim leaders, community leaders, politicians and some members of the Senior Staff Association of Nigerian Universities (SSANU), Lagos State University branch. The chairman of the body, Saheed Oseni, is one of the Oba's sons.

Also at the palace were officials of the Senior Staff Union of Colleges of Education in Nigeria (SSUCOEN), Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education (AOCOED), Ijanikin branch. They were led by the body's chairman, Wunmi Ombugadu.

The elder son of the Oba, Saheed Oseni, and his daughter, who was a former local government chairman, attended to visitors that came to sympathise with the family.

Daily Sun learnt that the monarch, who celebrated his 40th coronation anniversary on November 22, 2015, had retired to his bedroom about 7.00pm with one of his wives (Olori.) It was gathered that the quietude of the palace was suddenly disrupted by the noise of his children. When Oba Oseni entered his sitting room to check what was happening, four of the kidnappers allegedly emerged with guns and other dangerous weapons, demanding to know the whereabouts of the monarch.

It was gathered that as soon as the gunmen identified Oba Oseni, they moved to take him away. The ensuing commotion attracted his Olori, driver and other persons in the palace. The Olori and the driver were said to have put up a brave fight but the kidnappers allegedly overpowered them, battered the driver and dragged the monarch out of the room.

It was further learnt that the driver and another wife of the monarch engaged the kidnappers in an argument outside the palace while the senior Olori made calls to security personnel and the Oba's children. The younger wife was shot in the chest while the security guard identified as Okanlawon Sunday, who reportedly stood in the way of the kidnappers, was gunned down. He died instantly, Daily Sun was told.

The kidnappers, according to the Oba's driver, took the monarch away on foot through several streets in the community, even as they sporadically released gunshots into the air to scare away people.

In the quest to escape with their victim, the kidnappers allegedly killed a commercial motorbike operator, who attempted to frustrate

their escape. Akin Lalupon, the driver of a white Civilian Coaster bus, was also shot in the chest inside his vehicle.

A community leader, Alhaji Mustapha Toriola, told Daily Sun that the kidnappers walked with the Oba in their midst for about two kilometres. They then sneaked out through a bush path before escaping through the waterways. He explained that a man was shot on the leg by the kidnappers for attempting to stop them. He also stated that several residents saw the kidnappers but could not rescue the monarch because the suspected criminals were armed to the teeth, shooting sporadically into the air to scare away people.

One of the monarch's wives, Olori Nosifat Oseni, who was with the Oba in the bedroom before his abduction, told the reporter how the incident occurred. Her words: "I was with the Oba in the bedroom and we heard some noise. The Oba went out to warn the kids to stop making a noise and in the process, he met the kidnappers in the palace; they were asking for the whereabouts of the Oba. As soon as they saw him, they wanted to take him away and I came in to ask them what the matter was. Then they moved to take him away, but he resisted. One of them gave me a slap from behind.

"Another young Olori joined in the confrontation but they forced the Kabiyesi to come with them. And as the junior wife moved to stop them again, they shot her at close range. While outside, the security guard, Mr. Okanlawon Sunday, confronted them at the gate and he was shot dead straight away. The young man was rushed to the hospital at Igando General Hospital. He was later moved to the Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH)."

The driver to the monarch also explained how the incident took place. Said he: "When I confronted them, they wanted to kill me and they asked my wife why she was shouting. They asked her to go. But as they were leaving with Oba Oseni, the Oba's young wife and I followed them. In the process, she was shot while I was battered on the leg."

The deputy governor, Dr. Adebule, was among the early visitors to the palace. Her convoy drove into the palace at 9.05am. She prayed for the safe return of the monarch whom she described as an amiable monarch. She urged the kidnappers to release him immediately.

Members of the Celestial Church of Christ, Iba Parish 1, led by Superior Evangelist Toivde Michael, offered prayers for the release of the monarch. Toivde described the Oba as a nice person. "Since last night, we haven't slept, eaten or drunk anything. We have been praying and fasting for his safe return," the cleric told the reporter.

The Muslim prayers were led by the Chief Imam, who asked for Allah's intervention and the safe return of the Oba. Traditionalists were seen at their shrine, offering prayers and kolanuts and pouring libation for the safe return of Oba Oseni.

One Mr. Biodun, a friend to Akin Lalupon, the driver of Civilian Coaster bus, said the driver had closed for the day and was checking his vehicle when the kidnappers shot him from the front of the bus, with the bullet hitting him on the chest. He said Lalupon was rushed to Igando General Hospital and later to LASUTH. He said the driver was still in critical condition in the hospital while the okada rider was dead.

Police Public Relations Officer in Lagos, Dolapo Badmus, a Superintendent of Police, confirmed the abduction of the monarch, but said that no arrest had been made. She said the command would collaborate with the Ogun State Police Command to check the activities of kidnappers, who used the waterways to carry out their nefarious activities.

The police image-maker said the bandits killed one person. She could not, however, confirm the death of the motorbike operator.

The kidnappers were yet to contact the family at the time this report was filed. Anxiety was in the air throughout the community, with residents gathering in front of their houses, waiting for any news about the abducted king.