

Rivers of Blood

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COVER Story

• Woman gives a chilling account of how gunmen killed 5 members of her family in Rivers attack

From Tony John, Port Harcourt

Monday, January 1, 2018, would remain unforgettable in the memory of people of Omoku, in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area (ONELGA) of Rivers State. That was the day that was supposed to be a happy one and joyfully celebrated, being the first day in the New Year, but turned into a black day, a day of mourning, by bloodthirsty men of the underworld who visited four communities in Omoku and left in their wake a long trail of blood. The gun-totting bandits carried out coordinated attacks in Obohia, Uju, Aligwu and Omoku town, at the end of which several persons lost their lives while many sustained bullet wounds and are currently receiving medical attention.

Of all of the victims, the hardest hit is Prophetess Comfort Ordu, a mother of six children. In five minutes, she lost five persons that are dear to her. Her loss include her husband, Augustine Ordu (51), her 15-year-old-son, Wisdom, and her 14-year-old daughter, Precious. Two other victims were Favour Odili and Saviour, who visited her children.

When *Saturday Sun* visited Ordu's family house located along Augustine Close, in Obohia Agbogwe community, Omoku, the place was besieged by relatives and sympathizers. It was gathered that Wisdom and Precious, SS3 and SS2 students respectively, of Hallmark Academy, were buried same day of the massacre while their father's body had been deposited in a morgue.

Why I advised my family not to go outside – Woman

Heart-broken Prophetess Ordu said she is at loss for words with which to describe what happened. "I have a prophetic and healing ministry, where I attend to people, particularly women," she managed to say after finding her lost voice, somehow. "What happened on that fateful day (Monday) January 1, 2018, being New Year, is something I don't know how to describe. It happened after I prayed with my family members in my parlour for the New Year.

"By 2 am, I advised them not to go outside because I foresaw danger. But when after 2, I did not see two of my children – I was told that they went to where there was a carnival show within this vicinity – I told my husband to go and look for them. Suddenly, I saw six men enter my compound. They all dressed in black. I heard when they told my sister that they were sent to my house by government.

"I hid inside one of the rooms. One of my sons and my sister's son ran away. My sister asked them what was the problem that made them to pursue the boys into the house. They challenged my sister. I saw them, but I did not come out because I did not know their mission.

"After they challenged her, they went outside and saw a boy who was coming to call my son so that they could go to the carnival and they shot him dead. Later they shot dead my husband and two of my children outside as they were returning home.

"My husband just went out to bring the children back. He did not go outside for the carnival. The gunmen shot them for no just reason. That time they came inside the house, my sister asked what was the problem. They did not tell her.

"I don't have problem with anybody; my husband did not have issues with anybody, neither my children. My husband is not a cult member; he is not a politician. I do not belong to any women meeting. It is only my church I know. My own is to pray and attend to people who come here with problems like sicknesses and pregnancy cases. I don't belong to women groups.

"I lost five persons; my husband, my two children, and my children's two friends, Saviour (boy) and Favour Odili. My gateman, Desmond, was also shot, but he is hospitalized. He went out with my husband to look for the children."

She told *Saturday Sun* she had a premonition of a looming danger, which was why she advised members of her household not to go outside.

"As a prophetess, I had gotten the message and I know I had prophesied and advised people to be careful about the 2017/2018 crossover," she recalled. "Every time I mounted the pulpit, the message would come and I gave them the message. I always advised them to be watchful because there was danger ahead, particularly 2017's December 31 vigil.

"I regularly prophesied to people and my children, to be very careful during the crossover because the message was steadily coming and quite clear. I told people that whoever crosses to 2018 should be grateful to God. That was why when it was 12 midnight and we shouted "Happy New Year", I advised everybody not to step outside, especially, knowing how the town is. I told them that people would come for silent killing, that they should be careful.

"I repeatedly told everybody to stay indoor. And I went to bed. While I was sleeping, I had the feeling of four persons going out of my body. I called my sister in that trance and told her that I did not see four persons in the house; that four persons have gone out of my body. She was surprised and ran outside and said 'Mummy, it is true. I have not seen Daddy, Precious, Wisdom and Desmond'.

"I told her that they should look for them before she told me that my husband has gone to look for them. Just five minutes after I entered the room, the six armed men came into our house.

Buried dreams of her dead children

Prophetess Ordu noted that Wisdom had wished to be a lawyer or an engineer. "Just as his name is, he was intelligent to the extent that, if you asked him a question, he would give you several answers that you cannot believe a boy at his age could give. Wisdom and Precious were quite amazing children in terms of education. When they speak with you, they talk far above their ages. The two children were something else. They behaved as if they have the gift of prophesy like their mother, especially the girl.

"In fact, sometimes, she would say that something within her is telling her that she would die young. But I would rebuke her. That was why I always told her to be careful. On career, Precious would always say she would be a fire-fighter expert."

The devastated mother lamented the loss of her family, "My husband is an easy-going man," she said. "He is the kind of person that does not want any problem in life. He did not have friends; those you can call his friends are the ones in the church or same club. He did not like noise or problems. When he was alive, he avoided discussing anything that would cause trouble, let alone partake in any trouble. He loved peace and associated with peaceful people.

"He always advised the children, especially whenever they returned from school, to read their books and to keep off bad friends, because he did not have friends and would want them to toe his path. He never wanted them outside. The children also heeded their father's advice. Any time they returned from school, they would be indoor, either reading their books, or doing class assignments."

According to her, the last private discussion she had with her late husband was on December 30, on how to cross over to 2018, and the plans for the New Year. "I told him that the way I saw the environment (Omoku town), it was hot. I told him that on December 31, he should not move out anyhow. Instead of going to visit friends, let them visit him. He accepted."

Worry over repeated attacks of the family

According to her, hoodlums had attacked the family before, in 2010. But, that time, no life was lost. "This is not the first time; they had come here. That is why I don't have much to say. When they came that time, they overwhelmed everybody and ordered us to lie down. They said they came for me. They searched but did not see me. They threatened to shoot my husband, if I did not come out. I then came out. They demanded I give them money or forfeit my life. I told them that I did not have money. They later left the house".

She expressed worries over the attack on her family, reiterating that she did not know “who and who” she had offended. “What I know is that, in the course of my ministration, I attend to everybody and I tell them the truth. I don’t give false messages. I know I do tell people that come around to live a straightforward life and to shun evil. I don’t collect money before I attend to people who have challenges. I give general message. My main concern is for God to use me and provide solution to people’s problem.

“I could recall that there was a time I attended to a young man’s pregnant wife. At the end, the persons expressed his mind that he was surprised the way I attended to his wife with passion. He said that things they hear outside about me are different from things he had seen. Otherwise, they would have carried out some destructive actions. I could not believe that. I laughed and handed everything to God.

“But to say that I have problem with anyone in any form or I destroyed somebody’s property to warrant this attack, it is not true. I have been in this ministry since 2002, when I was pregnant with the late Wisdom. Maybe their annoyance is because I always tell them to shun evil in the land. What happened to me is not ordinary. That was the revelation I received. Otherwise, my God would not have allowed it to come near my family. What happened was just like an invocation. Even, when the hoodlums came in the house, they did not bang on any door. They did not carry out their operation in the house. That is why I see it as an invocation. Notwithstanding what has happened, I still communicate with God and He has not abandoned me.

“My advice to children in all homes is to be very careful in life and to take heed to their parents’ advice. Last year (2016), they came in the night and sat outside. People opposite us saw seven of them. They told us this in the morning. It is once or twice. Ordinarily, we don’t keep our gate open. It is because of the crossover prayer. Our gate is always closed. It was the carnival that was used to lure my children outside. That is why I believe it was an invocation.”

The devastated woman appealed: “Anything government can do to bring the perpetrators of this heinous crime to justice is acceptable. Though, nothing can bring back the losses, government should come to the aid of grieving families.”

Other survivors’ accounts of the attacks

Two persons, Ifeanyi and Chituru, who escaped death by the whiskers, narrated their encounters with the bandits before they started their operation. Twenty three-year-old Ifeanyi, who is still in shock, said he would have also lost his life if he had not jumped a fence to escape. According to him, he hid in a nearby church till the shootings were over.

“When we sighted them inside the compound, my cousin’s friend thought the men were OSPAC (local vigilance) members. But when I saw the guns, I took off. I did not want to know whether they were OSPAC members or not. All of them were dressed in black and wore face cap. I couldn’t recognize any of them. I stayed where I ran to till 7 am in the morning. In the church where I hid, I could hear sustained gunshots.”

In her own account, Chituru said that God gave her the boldness to confront the gunmen. “I was inside the children’s sitting room, when I saw my two cousins run inside,” she said. “They were shouting OSPAC and I asked them why they were running if those were OSPAC members.

“I went and blocked the door where one of the boys ran into. One of them came there and asked him why he was chasing the boys. He did not answer me and left. I followed him to the main parlour, where another of his colleague with gun, ordered me to lie down. It was God that gave me the boldness to challenge them. If they were OSPAC, the type of gun they carried was too frightening. I was supposed to be afraid. If not for that courage, they could have shot those my two cousins. It was just God that prevented them”.

However, at the end of the day, they succeeded in killing her father, sister and brother. “Their death is like a dream to me,” she said. “It is a big loss to us. People should help us; do whatever you can to draw the attention of the government and concerned Nigerians to these losses. I know they cannot come back again. But, at least, we need to punish the people that have caused us this pain. They took my father, my sister and brother away from me. This pain is too much for us.”