

By NGOZI UWUJARE

The people of Eteo community in Eleme Local Government Area of Rivers State got a rude shock early in the year when on January 5, 2019, an armed gang stormed the house of a certain Phillip Obari with the murderous intention of spilling his blood. The quarry was lucky enough to escape by making good his escape through the backyard. However, the would-be killers made sure he paid dearly for that by shooting his wife to death. At the time of her death, Dorcas Obari, 35, was five months pregnant.

The outrage caused by the barbarity spurred the police to step-up their investigation and two days later, on January 7, the anti-cultism squad led by Supol Ahijo Lawson nabbed the gang allegedly responsible for the killing.

Rivers State Commissioner of Police, Usman Belel who spoke with *Saturday Sun* identified the leader of the gang as Loveday Emmanuel, 25, whom he alleged is a “point man” of the Iceland cult. Other members of the gang caught in the roundup include Kenneth Gomba, 25, Monday Obaa, 27 and Godfrey Chattey, 19.

The police boss reeled out some of the crimes allegedly perpetrated by the gang in the past. According to him, the band was responsible for the kidnap of one Kaleed Murtari in Eteo from whom they collected the sum of five hundred thousand naira and dispossessed him of his Hyundai Solanta car in 2018.

The same gang is alleged to have killed over 10 suspected rival cultists in different institutions. On their rap sheet is also the kidnap of six victims in the Elemo community from whom they extorted various ransom. They purportedly killed victims who could not afford their ransom, abandoning the corpses in the bush. Expectedly, their arrest sparked wild jubilation in Eleme community.

A crime of mistaken identity

The prime suspect Loveday Emmanuel told *Saturday Sun* he was the cult leader of the Iceland group. He also admitted that he is a mechanic by profession.

“In January 2018, I was the one who led my gang to the house of Philip Obari. I wanted to kill him because I was informed that he was responsible for my uncle’s death. Immediately he saw me, he escaped through the backyard. I went inside the house and saw his pregnant wife. I shot her before leaving the house.”

He also detailed some of the past atrocities of his six-man gang. “So far, we have kidnapped 10 victims. We killed those who refused to pay ransom, while those who paid were released immediately they brought the ransom worth millions of naira. We have killed several cultists during clashes. We killed some leaders within Eteo community and took over their property.”

Emmanuel who hails from Eleme Local Government of Rivers State, however, conceded that killing the pregnant woman was a gross mistake. He said: “It was in the course of police investigation I got to know that her husband

was not the one who killed my uncle. Somebody else was responsible. Now I have to face the consequence of my action.”

Reliving the horrific moment, Obasi, husband of the deceased, recalled: “On that day, they came knocking at the door. Immediately I saw them, I knew my life was in danger. I escaped through the backyard, but I had not gone far when I heard a gunshot. I came back to find my pregnant wife in a pool of blood. She died there and we had to take her corpse to the mortuary.”