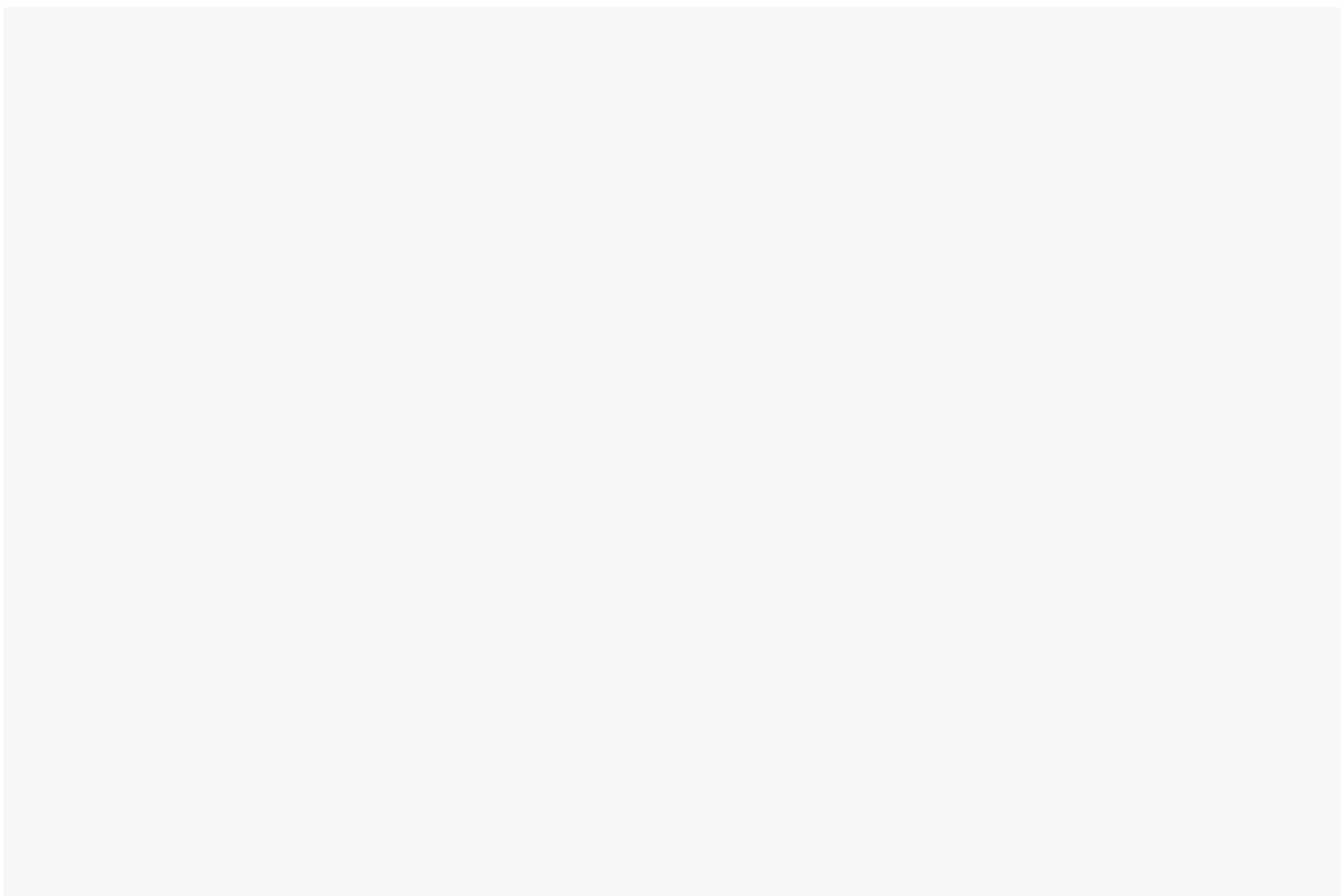


# Mean minions

- After collecting ransom from his wife, these kidnappers still went ahead to kill businessman
- 1 killed, 6 arrested in police raid of hideout

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7th December 2019



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## Ngozi Uwujare

**On November 2, 2019, Darlington Harry was kidnapped in Port Harcourt for a ransom of N20 million. His wife was able to pay one million naira to the kidnappers. And nothing was heard of him again.**

The true story of his abduction, murder and burial at the hands of his captors came to light recently after a successful operation by the Eagle Crack Squad of the Rivers State Command of the Nigeria Police extracted confessions from six members of the kidnap gang.

According to Rivers State Commissioner of Police, Mr Mustapha Dandaura, the deceased was with his lawyer along Azikiwe-Ojoto junction when the kidnappers accosted them, dragged him into their vehicle and zoomed off.

The case, which was originally reported at Azikwe Police Station, was later transferred to the Eagle Crack Squad, led by Superintendent of Police Adetuyi Gbenga Benson. After days of intelligence gathering, the squad had tracked the abductors to their hideout and engaged them in a gun duel. The gang's kingpin, Ezekiel Thomas, a.k.a. Efficcy, was killed in the gunfight, while six members of the gang were arrested. Three reportedly escaped with bullet wounds. Beside the roundup, police also recovered arms and ammunition. The suspects' confessions facilitated the recovery of five different cars which belong to their victims and had been put to use in their various operations. Following their arrest, some of their past hostages had appeared at the police station to identify some of the vehicles in which they were held hostage for six to 10 days before their ransom was paid. In all, seven victims were rescued from their hideouts.

### **An unusual abduction**

The abduction and murder of Darlington Harry by the gang has been traumatic for his wife, Lovely, a mother of two.

Here is the harrowing tale she narrated to *Saturday Sun*: “My husband was a printer and he had a case with his landlord at a magistrate court. His lawyer always called to brief him about his case. On November 2, my husband and the barrister were together in a vehicle when a car overtook them and some men came out of the vehicle and dragged him into their car and took him away at about 7 pm. The barrister had reported the case at Azikiwe Police Station after which he called me at about 9 pm to inform me that my husband had been kidnapped. On November 4, the kidnappers called my husband's phone and told me they were hired to kill him. They then demanded a ransom of N20 million to release him. The second day, November 5, I spoke with my husband on how to get the money. My husband told me to withdraw his N6million from UBA bank. I went to UBA, but the bank had blocked his ATM card because he had earlier reported the card missing. My husband begged me not to involve policemen.”

Lovely is a native of Ikwerre Local Government Area of Rivers State, while her late husband was from Etimekpo Local

Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

The most agonizing part of the ordeal was the phone calls she received: “The kidnappers called me on phone 10 times and I heard how they were torturing him. They insisted the ransom of N20 million must be paid before they would release my husband. I had to start negotiating with them,” she recalled.

On November 6, the kidnappers ordered her to bring the money to Mile 3 park. “It was my husband’s younger brother, Solomon Harry they directed to Mile 1, Diobu, Port Harcourt, around 5 pm. They asked him to drop one million naira.”

After the payment of the ransom, she didn’t hear from him or his captors again.

“The goods my husband was expecting from China arrived on December 1 but there was no way we could clear them. I didn’t hear from my husband again,” she stated.

### **Confession of the suspects**

Four of the suspects were identified as Miracle Ezekiel, Francis Okon, Sunday Gabriel and Bright Victor.

Gabriel, 24, who spoke on their behalf told *Saturday Sun*: “We were 10 in our gang. We kidnapped Darlington Harry because one of the workers in his office gave us the job to kidnap him. He told us he had a lot of money.”

He admitted that the gang, under its leader, Ezekiel Thomas, had kidnapped and held several victims hostage at their hideout.

“They (victims) spent between seven and 10 days until their families paid their ransom,” he said. “I was the one who fed Darlington Harry while he was in our captivity. I gave him food every morning. Ezekiel (The gang leader) was the one who collected the one million naira ransom from his wife.”

Of what became of the victim, he clarified: “We shot him dead when he was struggling with us. We buried him at the bank of the river between Ojiko and Etche.”

As for their leader, Gabriel affirmed he was shot dead during the exchange of gunfire when police raided their camp.

“Our intention was not to fight back but to escape; unfortunately, we were caught,” said the suspect.

In the meantime, detectives are still searching for the victim’s corpse in order to have it exhumed and reburied. Likewise, too, suspects at large are still being tracked by detectives. Commissioner of Police Dandaura vowed that operatives of Eagle Crack Squad will not relent until every one of the fugitives has been brought to book.





## **Nnamdi Kanu: How I was smuggled out of Nigeria**

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