

## EDITORIAL

## HAZARDS POSED BY DOMESTIC WORKERS

It is important to carry out background checks on domestic staff before hiring them

A few weeks ago, a Chief Magistrate Court sitting in Akure, capital of Ondo State, ordered that two suspects, Daniel Ita Effiong and Olayemi Bamitale be remanded in prison for the murder of Professor Albert Ilmode, a former Vice-Chancellor of Federal University of Technology, Akure. According to police prosecutor Isah Atenegebe, the two accused persons who were domestic staff to the late vice-chancellor, had on June 21 this year strangled their former boss.

In their confessional statements to the police, the duo reportedly lured the late VC into his garage on the pretext that there was an electric spark there and after killing the 78-year old don, dragged his body and hid it in his garage. Even though they eventually ran out of luck and were arrested, as gory as the details of their alleged crime are, it is just one of so many as there appears to be an upsurge in the cases of aides and such personal staff as cooks, maids, drivers and guards, directly attacking or colluding with criminals to harm their employers.

In March this year, for instance, three security guards - Usman Mohammed, Umaru Adamu, and

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another Mohammed, said to be at large, reportedly attacked, robbed and murdered their boss, Mr. Srivastava Shailesh Kumah, an Indian who was operational manager at Trans-Africa Farms and Food Company, owned by another Indian. Last December, in the same Lagos, a housemaid simply called Mary invited two robbers-- Daniel Ikong and Pius Denis-- to rob her boss in Magodo Estate.

A month earlier, an apprentice petroleum tanker



driver, Sani Saidu, allegedly killed his master and diverted a truck-load of aviation fuel destined for Port Harcourt to Taraba State. According to Lagos Police Command Criminal Investigation Department, the murdered driver, Shitta Aremu, a driver with S/K. Transport Services had hired Saidu to accompany him on the Port Harcourt trip. Aremu's employers reportedly became worried when, three days after he left Lagos with over N5.5 million worth of aviation fuel, the cargo still hadn't arrived Port Harcourt. Worse still, nothing was heard of the driver. According to the police, it was the company's tracking device that helped investigators realise that the truck with registration number AGL 368 XA was nowhere near Port Harcourt, but in Mutum Biyu, in Taraba State. It was Saidu's arrest in Mutum Biyu that revealed that he had murdered Aremu and diverted the truck to Taraba State where he sold the aviation fuel to raise money to travel to Dubai.

From Lagos to Port Harcourt, and from Calabar to Birnin-Kebbi, stories of domestic workers harming their employers or members of their household appear to be on the increase. It would seem that in hiring domestic workers, employers place little emphasis on running background checks on them. And in several instances, this has proven to be a mistake with dire consequences. Indeed, if those who had fallen prey to criminals disguised as domestic workers were more careful in recruiting them, perhaps the story would have been different.

Conventional wisdom teaches that people should not just take in strangers into their homes. There are too many criminals on the prowl hence the need to take precautions.

The Ekiti State Police Commissioner of Police, Isaac Eke had this advice to offer: "I want to appeal to people to always carry out background checks before employing domestic workers." It is an admonition that should be heeded for those who want to live in peace with their families.

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