

Buhari Mourns Gulak, as Police Say Assassins Killed

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- Jonathan, Akeredolu shocked***
- Remains buried in Abuja cemetery***

Deji Elumoye, Chuks Okocha in Abuja, James Sowole in Akure, Amby Uneze in Owerri and David-Chyddy Eleke in Awka

President Muhammadu Buhari yesterday condemned what he called "the heinous murder" of Adamawa State politician, Hon. Ahmed Gulak, in Owerri, Imo State capital, by yet-to-be identified gunmen yesterday.

He vowed that the federal government would spare no efforts in bringing the killers of Gulak, an All Progressives Congress (APC) chieftain, to justice.

Hours after the president announced the determination of his administration to fish out the killers, the Imo State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Abutu Yaro, said a combined team of

operatives of the command's Tactical Units, Intelligence Response Team, and Police Mobile Force had killed the suspected killers of Gulak.

Former President Goodluck Jonathan, to whom the deceased was a political adviser in his administration, and Ondo State Governor, Mr. Rotimi Akeredolu, expressed shock over the killing.

The Imo State Police Command has vowed to arrest the killers of Gulak.

Gulak, who was killed on his way to Sam Mbakwe International Airport to catch a flight to Abuja, was said to be a consultant to the Constitution Review Committee whose assignment to Owerri ended last Thursday after a two-day public hearing.

His remains, were, however, interred yesterday at the Gudu Cemetery, Abuja, in accordance with Islamic rites.

Gulak conducted the last gubernatorial primaries in Imo State where Senator Hope Uzodinma emerged as the candidate of the APC.

Uzodinma contested against Mr. Uche Nwosu, a son-in-law of his predecessor, Rochas Okorocha.

However, Gulak, who chaired the APC Governorship Primary Election Committee in Imo State, refused to sign an alleged forged primary election result, which declared Nwosu the winner of the APC governorship primary.

In the said result sheet, Uzodinma was said to have scored 9, 159 votes; while Nwosu got 455,655 votes.

Gulak had secretly returned to Abuja and alleged that he narrowly escaped being kidnapped in Imo State.

He told journalists that he and other committee members conducted a peaceful exercise, which produced Uzodinma as the party's standard bearer for the 2019 governorship election for Imo State.

He said Uzodinma won after securing "423,895 votes to defeat eight other aspirants, including Governor Rochas Okorocha's son in-law, Uche Nwosu."

Gulak alleged that about nine out of the 12-member committee were "kidnapped," by persons he described as "agents of the governor" who were led by a team of policemen to the hotel where the committee members were lodged.

He alleged that he sneaked out of Owerri "under the cover of darkness at about 4:00 a.m" to make his way to Abuja.

Confirming the murder of the APC chieftaincy, the police, in a statement, said: "On the 30/5/2021, at about 07:20hours, armed bandits intercepted and attacked a Toyota Camry

cab carrying Ahmed Gulak and two others who were on their way to Sam Mbakwe Airport to catch a flight.”

The state Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Bala Elkana, a Superintendent of Police, said in the statement that Gulak left his room at Protea Hotel without informing the police or sister agencies in view of the fragile security situation in the South-east and Imo State in particular.

“He left without any security escorts and while the cab driver took irregular route to the airport, six armed bandits who rode in a Toyota Sienna intercepted, identified and shot at Ahmed Gulak at around Umueze Obiangwu in Ngor-Okpala Local Government Area close to the Airport.

“The Commissioner of Police Imo State, CP Abutu Yaro, has directed a discreet investigation into the matter as Tactical and Special Forces have been deployed to cordon the area and arrest perpetrators,” he added.

Reacting to the killing, the president, in a statement by his spokesman, Mallam Garba Shehu, said: “I’m repulsed by such premeditated and gruesome murder of Gulak by evil people who are determined to undermine the peace, unity and territorial integrity of our country.”

He, however, warned that nobody or group of people who engage in such despicable acts should expect to go free, adding that “we will deploy all resources at our disposal to ensure that such callous and criminal elements are brought to justice.”

Buhari expressed his condolences to the family of the deceased, the people and government of Adamawa State as well as his friends and associates all over the country. On his part, Jonathan described Gulak’s death as a painful loss, noting that the deceased was a loyal public servant and dedicated patriot.

In a statement yesterday by his Special Adviser on Media, Mr. Ikechukwu Eze, Jonathan prayed God to comfort his family and grant his soul eternal rest.

He said: “I received with shock the death of Alhaji Ahmed Gulak who died on Sunday, May 30, 2021, in Owerri, Imo State.

“Gulak was a loyal public servant and dedicated patriot who gave his all in service to his country. His death is a painful loss to me and many others who worked and interacted with him.

“He will be remembered for his modest contributions to the growth of our nation’s democracy, especially his memorable days both as a skilful speaker of Adamawa State House of Assembly and political adviser in our administration.

"My deepest condolences to his family, the government and the people of Adamawa State, who are bound to feel the loss of this eminent and patriotic Nigerian.

"May God grant his family, friends and supporters solace, even as I appeal for calm while law enforcement bodies carry out their investigations."

Akeredolu also described the news of the death of Gulak as shocking and disturbing.

Akeredolu, in a statement he personally signed and made available to journalists in Akure, also described as "unacceptable," the statement credited to the Imo State Police Command that some bandits were responsible for Gulak's murder.

He said: "This is one murder too many. It is senseless and wicked. The perpetrators of this heinous act are enemies of this country.

"This contrivance is meant to mislead, confuse and destroy. It bears the unmistakable, despicable imprints of fifth columnists bent on setting the country on the path of conflagration. These criminals must not be allowed to succeed.

"We want to use this medium to express our solidarity with our brother Governor of Imo State, Senator Hope Uzodinma. We admonish him and other governors in the South Eastern states to brace up, and confront the current security challenge to put an end to the bloodbath in the land. The enemies of the people always employ the weapon of fear to create disaffection in the polity.

"This cowardly act is calculated to instigate Nigerians against each other, particularly Northerners, against the Igbo living outside the South-east."

Suspected Assailants Killed, Say Police

The Imo State Police Command also yesterday said its personnel had killed the suspected assassins of Gulak.

Elkana, in another statement, said rifles, pistol and ammunition were recovered from the suspects.

He added that the vehicles the slain hoodlums used in killing the former presidential aide were also recovered.

He stated that the operatives overpowered the gunmen during the gun duel, adding that the two Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC) used during the operation were riddled with bullets.

The statement said: "On 30th May, 2021, following distress received by the command on the gruesome murder of Ahmed Gulak, Police Special Forces, made up of Intelligence Response Team, Police Mobile Force (PMF) and Tactical Units from the command, were deployed in the scene at Obiangwu Junction at Ngorokpala LGA of Imo State. The teams

were given a clear instruction to identify and apprehend the perpetrators of the act with a view to bringing them to justice.

"Eyewitness account, especially the account given by the driver of the vehicle that was conveying Ahmed Gulak to the airport before the attack, gave a vivid description of the assailants and the vehicles they used in carrying out the attack.

"The assailants were said to have used a Toyota Camry 2005 model with silver colour; Toyota Sienna 1998 Model with golden colour; Toyota Hilux with white colour; and a Lexus RX 330 with golden Colour. (Registration numbers are withheld for security reasons).

"Having established the identity of the assailants and the description of the vehicles used in carrying out the attack, the teams further got details of the direction the hoodlums have taken.

"With further leads, the team was able to establish the location of suspects. The suspects were rounded up at Afor Enyigugu junction in Aboh-Mbaise Local Government Area. The hoodlums were met distributing onions to locals from a trailer they confiscated. The trailer was loaded with onions from the Northern region of Nigeria.

"On sighting the police, the hoodlums providing security coverage to those sharing the onions opened fire on the police teams. The gallant and battle-ready police officers swiftly returned the fire. The six hoodlums who carried out the killings and four other members of their gang were fatally injured. Three out of the four vehicles used in attacking Gulak were recovered.

"Three AK-47 rifles, one pistol, five AK- 47 magazines with ninety two rounds of live ammunition and criminal charms were recovered. During the encounter, two of the police armoured personnel carriers were riddled with bullets but survived the gun battle."