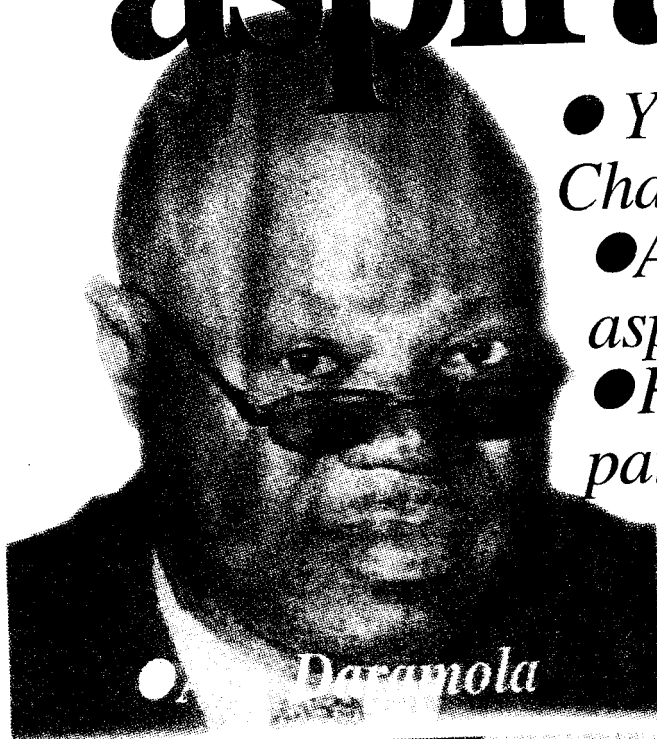


# Ekiti PDP guber aspirant killed



**Daramola**

- *Youths riot, burn PDP Chairman's house*

- *Another APGA guber aspirant escapes in Abia*

- *PDP alleges plot to give party bad name*

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By Dayo Johnson, Gbenga Ariyibi & Vincent Ujumadu

**A**DO-EKITI — SUSPECTED assassins went on the prowl yesterday, killing a PDP governorship aspirant in Ekiti State, Dr. Ayo Daramola, but missed another

governorship hopeful in Abia State, Chief Uzodinma Okpara.

This came barely two weeks after the assassination of

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# Ekiti PDP guber aspirant killed

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Engineer Funsho Williams, a PDP governorship aspirant in Lagos State. He was buried only last Thursday. Chief Okpara is a son of the late Premier of the old Eastern Region, Dr. Michael Okpara, and he is seeking to contest on the platform of APGA.

Dr. Daramola, 51, was attacked at his Ijan-Ekiti country home by a 12-man gang who, after failing to cut him down with their bullets, began clubbing him, before slitting his neck with a knife.

The assassins, *Vanguard* gathered, had scaled the fence of the house at about 1 a.m. and forced their way into the bedroom.

Dr Daramola was General Manager of the Ekiti State-based Poverty Reduction Agency (EK-CPRA) and a consultant to the World Bank.

The assailants, sources said, had engaged themselves in a drinking spree at a beer parlour close to the house of the deceased, apparently monitoring Dr. Daramola's movement and perfecting their strategy of getting him.

He joined the ruling PDP only two months ago and had earlier on Sunday held a marathon meeting with his party associates after which he retired to his private room. Some 15 minutes afterwards, the unexpected visitors struck. They headed straight to his bedroom where they forced the iron door open and opened fire on him.

*Vanguard* gathered that he was shot thrice but the bullets reportedly failed to kill him. They then clubbed him and slit his neck with a dagger. The assassins did not stop there: they vandalised his Explorer XLT Jeep with number plate Abuja EG898ABC.

The politician, *Vanguard* further gathered, appeared to have struggled to survive as he lost two of his upper teeth. His distress call to other occupants of the house to rescue him from his assailants could not help. Neighbours rushed him to the Ado-Ekiti Specialist Hospital after the assassins had carried out their dastardly act and vanished.

He, however, gave up the ghost before medical attention came.

## Youths on the rampage

Moments after the news of his assassination spread, youths in the town launched a protest, burning the house of the state Chairman of PDP, Chief Ropo Adesanya and two of his personal cars were torched. Also razed were buildings belonging to perceived political opponents of the deceased and the PDP secretariat in the town. The On-ijan of Ijan-Ekiti, Oba Samuel Oyewole Fadaunsi, lamented the murder of the prominent politician.

Oba Fadaunsi recounted that the deceased and himself were in the same social age grade in the town and were childhood friends.

He, however, appealed to natives of the town to "maintain their calm at this crucial time," adding that the state government had promised to get to the root of the matter.

Also reacting, Chief Ropo Adesanya, whose house was torched by the protesters, said he was dazed and sad when he heard about the killing of Dr Daramola.

The PDP Chairman, who claimed that the deceased was his first cousin said he, Daramola, was with him about a week ago during which he sought his advice on how to go about his gubernatorial ambition.

"As state Chairman, I am highly dazed and sad that somebody who joined our party about two months ago has been killed. About my property razed, I may repair it, but what of the life that was lost. This is a most saddening moment of my life," he said.

## Ehindero visits

Inspector-General of Police, Mr Sunday Ehindero, personally visited Dr. Daramola's house yesterday to assess the situation. Ehindero who arrived Ado-Ekiti at about 6.20 p.m. yesterday led a powerful team of high ranking police officers to the state and paid a courtesy visit to Governor Fayose, said the killers would not go undetected.

The IG said he was in the state to get first hand information on the incident and that he had been at Ijan-Ekiti to see things for himself. He visited the morgue to see the corpse and also spoke with some witnesses. "I want to assure you that police would get to the root of this incident, it would not be a case of undetected murder," Ehindero said.

## ACD speaks

The Advanced Congress of Democrats (ACD) in a reaction asked the Federal Government to put an urgent stop to the orgy of killings currently rocking the political landscape. The party noted that for the second time in less than a month, the country has to mourn yet another gubernatorial aspirant of the PDP whose life was tragically terminated in the early hours yesterday.

According to the party, the nation is yet to recover from the horror and trauma of the killing of Engineer Funsho Williams when the murder of Dr. Ayo Daramola was added to the lengthening list of slaughtered politicians.

"What Nigerians expect from the political class today (yesterday) is not violence, murder, hate or lawlessness but rather a programme of action to deliver the people from abject poverty, disease, frustration, hopelessness and injustice.

"However if the objective of those behind this murder is to scare away responsible and non violent politicians from the nations' politics and to create an atmosphere of siege to make the 2007 elections impossible, the political class also owes it a duty to these fallen patriots to ensure that these anti-democratic forces do not achieve their objectives," the party warned.

## APGA aspirant escapes

Barely 24 hours after his declaration for All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) as its governorship aspirant in Abia State, former state chairman of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), Chief Uzordinma Okpara, yesterday narrowly escaped assassin's bullets in his country home at Ohuhu in Umuahia North local government area of Abia State. Also in the same community, a middle-aged woman who father was buried the previous day was killed by suspected armed robbers and two other people in the family sustained injuries.

Uzordinma, son of the late Dr Michael Okpara, former premier of the defunct Eastern region, had on Saturday opened his campaign office in the Abia State capital while the national leader of the party, Chief Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu at a ceremony in Aba, welcomed him into the party.

But at midnight on Sunday, about 20 suspected assassins invaded his newly completed house, shooting.

Two cars including his official 504 car and a jeep were also vandalised. All the electronic gadgets, in the storey mansion were destroyed and some of the

doors broken.

Narrating his ordeal to reporters, Okpara wondered why anybody would want to kill him. He could not remember having done any wrong to anybody.

He said: "What happened was that at about midnight, we started hearing consistent gun shots in the compound. Shortly after, I heard a bang. They used axe to pierce the wall. They destroyed the burglary proof and found their way into my bedroom. They ransacked everywhere and took my wife's trinkets and the money they found. When they were about to leave, one of them told me that they were sent to kill me but that they felt that I am a good person."

He said in spite of the attempt on his life, nothing would stop him from contesting the governorship of Abia State, adding that he saw nothing wrong in wanting to repeat the good things his father did in Abia State.

Governor Orji Kalu visited the Okpara family and expressed shock at the violence with the approach of the 2007 elections. "We have practised democracy in the last eight years and this is the first time we are hearing of this kind of story in the state," he said, and advised politicians to take it easy because it is only God that gives power.

He announced that in order to assist the police more to beef up security in the state, his administration would next week hand over 10 patrol vehicles to the state command, pointing out that mounting check points on the roads would not solve the problem.

The governor also said he would summon the Assistant Inspector General of Police in charge of Zone Nine and the commissioner of police to find ways of checking the latest development in the state.

## Bakassi: How do we carry our forefathers' graves— RULER

By Kingsley Omonobi & George Onah

**C**ALABAR — AS the clock ticked, yesterday, towards the D-hour for Nigeria to formally handover the Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon, the 90-year-old paramount ruler of Archbong in the Bakassi North-West, Etim Okon Etim wished it was all dream.

"How do we carry our (forefathers') graves to Akpabuyo (their new settlement)? We have fathers, mothers, even children in those graves. How do we carry these graves to where we will be resettled," he lamented.

"Honestly, this decision is very difficult. So you can now see our pains," he said at Archbong moments before 222 Battalion of the Nigerian Army lowered the green-white-green flag of the country in Archbong.

"I, like many of our people, was born and bred here. Our forefathers were born and bred here and we have grown to know this country as our own. Initially, we thought that this handing and taking over of our land, property, cultural ancestry would pass like a dream. But today it is a painful reality.

"We are shocked, to say the least. I wish you could open my mind and that of our people to see what we are feeling. We are shocked that our own Federal Government decided to give out this place. We have been in shock since the pronouncement was made.

"But since we don't have any alternative, we are asking and begging the Federal Government to at least track the promise to re-

The AIG, Mr Ade Ajakaiye while reacting to the alleged assassination attempt on Okpara said his men had started investigation.

He, however, said it was not possible for the police to provide security for everybody, adding that any plan for murder was usually difficult to find out before the attempt was made.

## PDP reacts

Meanwhile, the PDP denounced the killing of Dr Daramola and alleged that the spate of political assassination in the country was being carried out by those who are out to portray it (PDP) in bad light.

National Secretary of the party, Chief Ojo Maduekwe, in a statement after a meeting of the National Working Committee (NWC), asked the security agencies to unearth what and who are behind the renewed spate of killings.

The statement reads in part: "While we commend the Federal Government and various security agencies for a manifest resolve to deal decisively with the ugly trend of killings, for whatever reason, of well-known politicians, by a new specie of blood thirsty criminals, we urge the mobilisation of all resources to apprehend those behind this disturbing pattern no matter how highly placed, and no matter how many they are.

"Police must be seen to deploy all their investigative arsenals to unravel these killers if the confidence of decent people in the vocation of politics is to be sustained. We urged our members not only to remain law-abiding, but to refrain from language and conduct that facilitate a culture of violence."

settle us. They made that promise a long time ago. This is 2006. We are still here. Do we relocate to the bush just like that?

"I am telling you that the promise to relocate us has not been fulfilled and now that they have promised to relocate us, we are asking that they should do so with compensation. One major worry we have in the whole saga, however, is the grave of our forefathers."

## Residents weep

The natives turned out for the transfer in black suits, gowns and skirts, with tears flowing down their cheeks as the Nigerian flag came down.

Leading the pack of residents in their mourning clothes to the venue of the unpleasant event were politicians, traditional, opinion and youths leaders. The old and young, children and sundry wore long faces, apparently wishing that someone could stop the event.

Not even the rain which came with bouts of winds could change the situation as military, government and civilian delegates from Nigeria and Cameroon matched to the open ground to effect the change in ownership of the territory.

Nigeria's Chief of Defence Staff, General Marthin Luther Agwai, said on the occasion that Nigeria deserved an applause from the rest of the world "for this demonstration of great brotherly African spirit. This has further affirmed Nigeria as a democratic country that respects the rule of law, international conventions and agreements."