

By Simon Ebegbulem, Benin City

**M**ADAM Mercy Imasuen, the second wife of Mr. Joseph Imasuen, is yet to come to terms with the reality that her husband who came to her restaurant to relax as usual in the evenings, was shot dead right in her presence. That was after the assassins carted away all the money she made from sales that fateful day.

The late Imasuen was manager of a burrow pit located along Ekenwan Road Benin City. A burrow pit is a site where earth is excavated, and sold to people who may want to use it in tipper lorry-loads as filling, or some other construction purpose. Ever since the incident occurred on the 17th day of June, 2007, Mercy and the two other wives of the deceased have been indoors because of the fear of the unknown.

It was thus not easy to track Mercy, who locked herself up in her apartment, mourning her husband. As a matter of fact, it took the intervention of their lawyer, Henry Idahagbon before she agreed to open her doors for a chat. But that was just the first hurdle. For over ten minutes, she remained speechless and was visibly distraught. Her emotions betrayed her immediately as she pleaded that she would not want to comment on the matter because recalling the experience would further devastate her. However, she reluctantly narrated the story as she wept.

"Today (Monday) is exactly three months that my husband was assassinated. I had closed for the day, so I was trying to lock up my shop while my husband was waiting for me. But suddenly somebody entered my shop with a gun and said we

should lie down. My late husband and I obeyed. At this time, there was shooting everywhere. So, one of the men who came inside the shop ordered me to go and bring all the money I have. My husband quickly told me to co-operate with them. They snatched my bag where I kept money from the day's sales. I even went and brought the money I used to keep inside a disused refrigerator, and added to the one they'd taken already, thinking they only came to rob. But surprisingly, they turned towards where my husband was still lying down and shot him in the head."

She continued: "After they shot him, they came out shooting sporadically while making their escape. This incident happened about few minutes to eight. People were running helter-skelter so it was even difficult for me to get help. When I saw that they had left, I rushed towards my husband and he was in a pool of blood. We rushed him to the hospital but he gave up the ghost before we got there," she lamented.

**M**r. Joseph Imasuen was the manager of a burrow pit owned by one Mr. Fred Omorotionwan. His death is still a mystery because the police was yet to uncover those behind the dastard act. Sadly enough, *Saturday Vanguard* learnt that his death may not be unconnected with the problem he had with some people over the ownership of a piece of land. The deceased's first wife, Madam Rose Imasuen and his eldest son, Mr. Jonathan Imasuen who just returned from Morocco where he resided confirmed that the deceased had series of cases with some persons in the state Police Command. However, they refused to tell the public who they suspected for the murder. *Saturday Vanguard* learnt that some youths of Uzebu Community had earlier threatened the deceased before he was finally nailed.

In a petition signed by solicitors to Mr. Omorotionwan, Edward Yalaju & Co, dated 28th August, 2007, addressed to the Edo State Police Commissioner, Mr. Bala Hassan, they alleged that the policemen investigating the murder of Mr. Imasuen and

## Assassins track father of 12 to wife's shop, shoot him dead after robbing wife

one Fred Ogundezi who was earlier murdered led to Mr. Omorotionwan owner of the burrow pit where the deceased Imasuen worked as the manager, being remanded at the Oko Prisons. The petition accused the policemen investigating the killings of having been induced financially allegedly by those who may have perpetrated the crime.

The petition added that "shortly after the assassination of Mr. Imasuen, these same people threatened to kill our client anytime he is released from prison custody just as they did to Mr. Imasuen. In the light of the above, we are soliciting for the intervention of your good office into the murder of the Joseph Imasuen and arrest the persons mentioned. We also solicit for the intervention of your good office to prevent the persons from killing Mr. Omorotionwan as they have boasted, once he is released from prison."

Contacted, Commissioner Hassan declined to comment, saying the matter had already been taken to up. *Saturday Vanguard* learnt that the matter had been taken to court, therefore he would not comment on it.

More family members spoke on the tragedy that befell them with the assassination of their bread-winner. Excerpts:

### Mrs Rose Imasuen is the eldest wife of the deceased Lucky Imasuen

"I was here at home at about eight o'clock in the evening when somebody came to tell me that my husband was shot. When I now rushed to the place, I was told that he had been rushed to the hospital. It's



●Late Mr. Joseph Imasuen; Shot dead in wife's shop. Photos by Simon Ebegbulem

*He was killed at the second wife's restaurant along College Road; he was shot in the head. He had twelve children in all, three wives and three grandchildren*

been three months since he died, June 17, 2007. We have done the burial and I leave everything to God. He was killed at the second wife's restaurant along College Road; he was shot in the head.

"He had twelve children in all, three wives and three grandchildren. Since he died,

we have been suffering. We only get help from his friends and other good Samaritans. I no longer go to the market, feeding has been a problem but God is our strength. The truth is that we do not care about the police investigation because I believe that my husband is already dead and there is nothing that can

bring him back. But God will judge all.

### On the land dispute her husband allegedly had with some people

What happened was that we bought the land from one Toronto in 2005. Then my husband now decided to go and develop the place, the people now said they won't sell the land again. So we started settling the matter, they now said okay they have sold the other land that my husband should carry the other 100 x 100. We now tried to start developing the place the people now said no again. One woman now came and said she has bought the place that she won't agree. So the man that owns the place now told her that he did not sell the place to her that the place she sold to her was smaller that she paid N70,000.00. So we took the matter to the police, went to the AIG's office and the matter was settled in our favour. But after some time, the woman brought a court letter. The woman now told my husband to bring some money and settle her. But my husband refused. My husband was assassinated the day the court decided to rule on the matter. Actually, the land belongs to our daughter who lives abroad; she asked us to buy the land for her.

### Jonathan Imasuen, eldest son of the deceased eldest son says the family was at a loss over what happened to his father.

"I reside in Morocco. My family sent for me, that my father is dead. I was shocked. I came back and I thought it was a lie but when I got to the mortuary, I saw my father's dead body. Then I asked my family members, what happened, how can somebody come and shoot

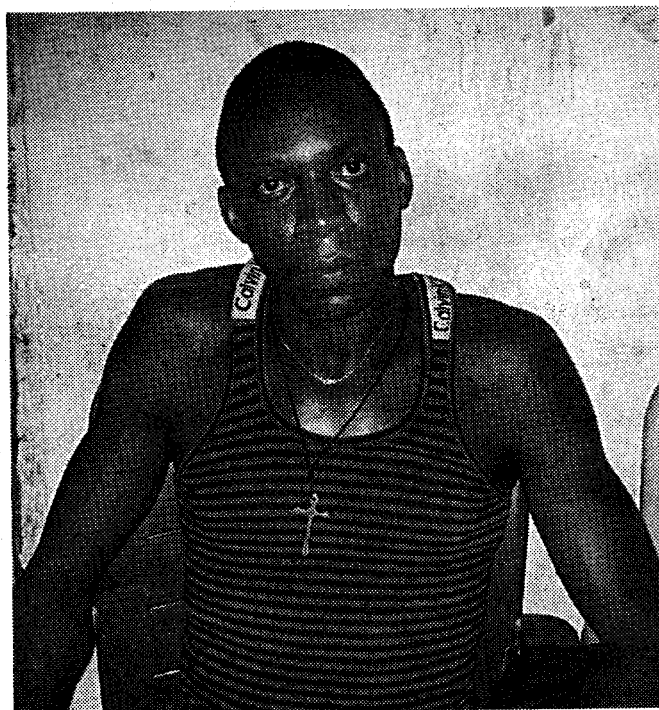
my dad and get away with it? They told me that my father was having a problem with some people concerning a burrow pit. I now asked who they suspected; they said nobody. My mum also briefed me about the case my father had with some people over land. The particular land they are talking about now, my father had already started building on the land and the project had even gone far. So it is shocking to know that people will want to claim your land in this Benin even when you have built on it. I told them that this is just oppression.

"I said anyway that was not why I came back, I came to bury my dad. However, I went to Egbotubu Police station to lodge the complaint over the killing of my father. I was told that the matter was already with them and that they have referred it to the state CID.

**T**he Police asked me that as the first son of my dad who do I suspect? I told them that I do not stay here so I do not know even who to suspect. I told them to give us the coroner's form so that we can give it to Dr. Aimagbedo to process the death certificate. They were just looking at me, so the SSS men there now asked me whether I had forgotten that my father had a case with somebody at the state CID, concerning a burrow pit.

"I told them that I was told but I do not know much about the matter because I was not in the country. I told them that the truth of the matter is that my family said they do not want any case. I told them to just give me the coroner's form to enable me bury my father but they were not taking me serious. So I went to Bar. Idahagbon's father because he was my father's close friend. So the next day he went to the Police with me and they said okay since we do not want a case, that one SSS man will go with us to where my father was killed. They took my statement and it was after all these that they now gave me the certificate before we now did the burial.

"As the senior son, I have been praying to God to give me the strength and the wisdom to take care of my younger ones, that is all I am thinking of now. For now, I am still watching the Police; it is not going to be easy."



●Jonathan Imasuen: Numbed by dad's killing



●Mrs. Rose Imasuen, first wife