

Stray bullet kills 20-month-old child in Imo



A stray bullet from a yet-to-be-identified source has allegedly hit and killed a 20-month-old child at Umuoba-Uratta in the Owerri North Local Government Area of Imo.

The News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that the incident occurred at about 10p.m. on Monday.

The child, identified as Emmanuel Eleweke, was the third of his parents, Mr and Mrs Okechukwu Eleweke.

In an interview with NAN, the mother of the deceased, Mrs Kelechi Eleweke, expressed shock over the “mysterious circumstances” surrounding the boy’s death.

Narrating the incident, she said, “I was with him yesterday (Monday) night on my bed after dinner and night prayer.

“And one of my prayer points was that his father will not die a premature death, and my son answered, ‘Amen.’

“We got playing until he lay on my body to sleep.

“Suddenly, he rolled down from my body and lay on the bed.

“He refused to sleep, in spite of my effort to lull him to sleep on my body. Instead, he shrugged me off.

“A few seconds later, I heard a huge sound and felt a splash of sand-like objects on my body.

“This was followed by my son’s scream for help as he persistently shouted, ‘Mummy, Mummy.’

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“The next thing I saw was blood all over his body and the bed.”

Eleweke said that she quickly carried him and rushed outside for help.

“My husband too got up, and we made efforts to get to a nearby private hospital,” she further said.

The woman, who was visibly heartbroken, said that instead of getting help from the hospital, the man that appeared like a doctor “demanded a police report before treating my child”.

According to her, in spite of our several pleas to him to rescue our son, the man simply ran a plaster round his head and asked us to take him to the Federal Medical Centre (FMC), Owerri.

She said that because she was half-dressed, she quickly returned home, while her husband continued with the effort to save their son.

Speaking further, the child’s father, Okechukwu, said that after waiting for a while on the road, he finally got a vehicle that took them to FMC.

He said, “For the period we were in transit, I can say the boy was alive until we got to the FMC gate.

“But getting into the emergency paediatric ward, the doctor on duty quickly examined him and pronounced him dead on arrival.”

He said that the family could not explain where the “mysterious bullet” that killed their child came from.

He also said that they, however, gathered on Tuesday morning that there were sporadic gunshots fired in the area on Monday night.

“I didn’t know about the gunshots until this morning, when my neighbours talked about them.

“They said that some people were shooting around our area in the night.

“Whatever they were celebrating that led to my son’s death, we don’t know,” Okechukwu said.

A former youth leader in the community, Mr Chika Ibeawuchi, who expressed grief over the tragic incident, could not confirm the direction the gunshots came from.

“I don’t know anything about the shootings, except that they lasted for more than 30 minutes.

“This is a tragedy. “It has never happened before in this community,” Ibeawuchi said.

He said that police officers from the Owerri North Divisional Headquarters came on Tuesday morning and took the baby along with the father to be able to extract the bullet from the child.

He appealed to the police to carry out a “diligent investigation” in a bid to unravel the circumstances that led to the death of the innocent child.

Efforts made to get a reaction from the police spokesman in the state, DSP Henry Okoye, were unsuccessful, as he neither picked up his call nor replied to the text message sent to his cellphone.

However, a senior officer at the divisional headquarters confirmed the incident to NAN on the condition of anonymity, adding that they were handling the matter.

(NAN)