

JUSTICE CHIOMA NWSU-IHEME'S STORY

How I was kidnapped by uniformed policemen in Benin City – Appeal Court Justice Nwosu-Iheme

[Bashir Abdulmujeeb, Ilorin](#) November 22, 2019

Appeal Court Justice Chioma Nwosu-Iheme, who was a victim of kidnapping in Benin City last month and recently regained her freedom after about 14 days in captivity, has narrated how six “uniformed policemen”, who parked their Hilux vehicle on bad stretch of a road in Benin City, abducted her and killed her police orderly, according to a report in The Source Magazine.

Justice Chioma Nwosu-Iheme was abducted on October 30, 2019 at about 11.30am in Benin City. Her security detail, a police inspector, was killed in the incident.

In a report in The Source Magazine on Thursday, Justice Nwosu-Iheme also dispelled initial insinuations that her abduction may be connected with the cases she was handling. She said her abduction was not pre-planned.

She said she was at the right place at the wrong time.

Speaking when a group of women, mostly choristers from the Cathedral of the Transfiguration of the Lord (CATOL), Anglican Communion, Owerri, visited her at her residence in Owerri, Justice Nwosu-Iheme recounted her ordeal in the hands of her abductors, revealing how she was abducted.

According to the report: “The abduction scene was a stretch of bad road in the city. Every motorist usually slowed down there. As her car was approaching the spot, there were ‘uniformed policemen’ there. Well-kitted, they packed their double-decked Hilux vehicle, stood by, AK 47 guns in hands.

“They were kidnappers. She didn’t know. Nobody knew. They had already, earlier, kidnapped four people, including mother and daughter. There was also a young ex-FUTO student, an engineer, who wept like a baby as soon as she recognized Nwosu-Iheme. He was classmate with her son at FUTO. The judge was in the habit of feeding all of them fat, and giving them pocket money each time they visited.

“The kidnappers were waiting to kidnap more people when her lordship’s SUV, bearing an FG plate number and judiciary, approached. They saw a policeman sitting in front, and knew that whoever must have a kidnap value. They smiled and readied themselves for action.

“As her vehicle slowed down, they saluted her. She raised her hand and took their compliments. That was when they struck.”

According to the report, before she could bring down the hand she had just raised to take the compliments, a volley of gunshots rained on the vehicle.

“Confused, she wondered where the shots came from. Momentarily, she was relaxed, thinking she was in the midst of policemen. But instinctively, she bent her head down. And so did her orderly, or so she thought. She didn’t know that he had been fatally shot. He was wearing a bullet proof vest. They knew and, so aimed at his forehead.

“Before she could comprehend what was happening, scores of bullets rained again, this time, shattering her car’s two back tyres.”

The report said the judge immediately told her driver to drive since they were in the city and it was in broad daylight, hoping that help would come.

According to the report, she thought of two options: To feign she was dead, or to allow them take her.

Weighing both options, she discarded the former. Over fears that if she feigned she was dead, “they may in anger, for losing a high profile price pump bullets into her. She opted to be brought out from the car, and put in the Hilux. That was where she met the others earlier kidnapped.”

Dispelling other insinuations about her abduction, the report quoted Justice Nwosu-Iheme thus: “I was not a target. I was not trailed. Nobody double-crossed my car. I was not on the Benin-Agbor road. It was in Benin city. I ran into them. Four people had been kidnapped before me. If I had delayed anywhere by 20 minutes, that would have saved us. They would have driven off before our arrival.”

Giving graphic details of what followed, the Source Magazine report said: “As soon as they put her in the Hilux, the first thing they did was to grab her wrist watch. They looked at it, they screamed. Their joy knew no bounds. These guys knew the make. Then, they grabbed her rings and her bangles and screamed some more. They went back to her car, took her handbag, saw the quality and knew they had hit a jackpot. Then, they went back and grabbed her suitcase. They took their time. Yet, the thousands of security personnel in Benin – military, police, civil defence, para-military – were nowhere near! God has buttered their bread, the abductors exclaimed. They, therefore, discarded the idea of waiting for some more victims. Justice Nwosu-Iheme was more than enough. They drove off, unchallenged. And this was inside Benin City!”

The report said all through the journey to their final destination, there were no police or military checkpoints, suggesting that the abductors knew their route.

According to the report, by the next morning, her abductors had known her identity fully from information on the internet, as the social media was awash with her rich curriculum. A judge of the Court of Appeal, which they ignorantly or derisively referred to as judge of the Appeal Supreme Court, was in their den.

“Madam justice, you have broken the internet. We thank God for providing you for us. We are happy you are in our midst. After you, we will not embark on any other job for the next six months. God has blessed us with you in our midst”, the report quoted her abductors as saying. (THISDAY)

Exclusive: Why, And How Appeal Court Judge, Nwosu-Iheme was Kidnapped; What Her Abductors Told Her



Author: [The Source](#)

November 21, 2019

By Comfort Obi

A group of women had come visiting. The women, most of them, Choristers came from the Cathedral Of The Transfiguration Of The Lord, (CATOL), Anglican Communion, Owerri. They came to rejoice with one of their own, Hon. Justice Chioma Nwosu-Iheme, PhD, who had just come back from the Lion's den. In her words she came out from the land of the dead.

So, the women came to celebrate with her and her family, to praise God for His mercies and protection.

Nwosu-Iheme, is CATOL's parishioner.

From the gate to her residence in Owerri, the women ushered themselves into her living room, heartily singing, and dancing to a popular Church victory song: "He (God) has given us victory, we will lift Him Higher, Jehovah, we will lift Him higher"

As they entered, everybody in the house, including Nwosu-Iheme and her doting husband, stood up, and sang and danced along. It was like a dancing competition, with hands and eyes lifted unto God. For about 25 minutes, Church songs, one after the other held sway. The praise songs, and the dancing, were apt.

For two weeks, Nwosu-Iheme's house was so quiet that the drop of a pin would be heard. It was a house in mourning. The mother and the rock of the house has been abducted, her fate unknown.

Nkwerre, her maiden and marital community, fared no better. The town was like one big mourning home. Their influential Traditional Ruler, the Eshi of Nkwerre, declared days of fasting. The women decided to bring out their wrappers for sale. The proceeds was to be their contribution to the demands of her abductors. They had also prepared for war. They set a date to march to, and on the Government House, Owerri. The Eshi prevailed on them to wait. Rich, Nkwerre young men were rearing to go. The Church was also hit.

The Dioceses of Nkwerre and Owerri declared prayers and fasting. At the Synod of Egbu Diocese, the Bishop, The Rt. Rev. Geoffrey Okorafor, made her ordeal a prayer point. The Judiciary, her constituency, was not left behind. The National President of the Nigeria Bar Association, NBA, Paul Usoro, SAN, issued a strongly-worded statement, deriding and decrying her abduction. Both the Edo and Imo branches of the NBA boycotted the Courts for days, in protest.

Justice Chioma Nwosu-Iheme was abducted inside Benin City, around 11.30am, on October 30, not along the Benin- Agbor road as was reported in the media.

For four days, her abductors made no contact with her family or anybody. On the 5th day, they did, and named their price.

And negotiations began

Days ran into two weeks. The negotiation went back on forth. An agreement was reached. On the 13th day, they called for the ransom money to be delivered. They promised to release her that night, somewhere, in Benin. It didn't happen. And they made no other contact.

But on the 14th day, late evening, Her Lordship's voice was the sweetest heard by her family in decades of her being wife and mom.

She called from the Protea Hotel, Benin City, to say she has been released; that she was free, and safe.

The CATOL women who came visiting just wanted to see her. To thank God. To pray with, and for her. And to hear her voice, even one word, one sentence.

They got more than they bargained for. They heard the story of her ordeal, why, and how she was abducted.

At some point, a number of the women became emotional. And so did Nwosu-Iheme, especially, when she spoke about her Police Orderly of 12 years, an Inspector. Her voice cracked. Tears rolled down her cheeks. "He was my friend, my kid brother, my Chief Security Officer. He was different. An honest police officer. He lived with me for 12 years. For those 12 years, he protected me with his skin. And finally, he gave his life for me. As long as I live, as long as my family members live, his family will never suffer. His six children will go to any school of their choice, to any level. That's a promise we, as a family, have made to God."

Following, is Hon Justice Chioma Nwosu-Iheme's story.

Abduction, Not Pre-planned. She Ran Into Her Abductors

Justice Nwosu-Iheme's abduction shocked Nigerians and the International community. Nigeria's first female Judge to have a PhD, reputed for her fearlessness and no-nonsense stand on issues, she had handled many sensitive cases, including the notorious 'Otokoto case'. At a very young age, she fearlessly, took on the case which had been rejected by a couple of other Judges. The fear when she was abducted was: Who dunnit?

Of the Appeal Court Division, Benin, she was presiding over appeal cases emanating from the 2019 General election at the time of her abduction. So, was she kidnapped because of the cases the Court was handling and/or had handled – Political or otherwise?

But she rubbished such fears and thoughts. The Appeal Court, unlike the High Court, is not a one man show. Usually, three Judges sit on an Appeal.

Her abduction was not pre-planned, she emphasized. She was at the right place at the wrong time.

Done with her duties in Benin, the Judge was on her way to Owerri when the unfortunate incident amazingly took place inside Benin City.

The abduction scene was a stretch of bad road in the city. Every motorist usually slowed down there. As her car was approaching the spot, there were “uniformed policemen” there. Well-kitted, they packed their double-decked Hilux vehicle, stood-by, AK 47 guns in hand.

They were kidnapers. She didn’t know. Nobody knew. They had already, earlier, kidnapped four people, including, mother and daughter. There was, also, a young ex-FUTO student, an engineer, who wept like a baby as soon as she recognised Nwosu-Iheme. He was classmates with her son at FUTO. The Judge was in the habit of feeding all of them fat, and giving them pocket money each time they visited.

The Kidnappers were waiting to kidnap more people when Her Lordship’s SUV, bearing an FG plate number and Judiciary, approached. They saw a Policeman sitting in front, and knew that whoever must have a kidnap value. They smiled, and readied themselves for action.

As her vehicle slowed down, they saluted her. She raised her hand and took their compliments. That was when they struck.

Before she brought down the hand she had just used to take the compliments, a volley of gun shots rained. Confused, she wondered where the shots came from. Momentarily, she relaxed, thinking she was in the midst of Policemen. But, instinctively, she bent her head down. And so did her Orderly, or so she thought. She didn’t know that he had been fatally shot. He was wearing a bullet proof vest. They knew and, so, aimed at his forehead.

Before she could comprehend what was happening, scores of bullets rained again, this time, shattering her car’s two back tyres.

She told her driver to drive on. Since it was in the city, broad day light, she thought, an intervention would come. None came.

She said she had two options: To feign she was dead, or to allow them take her. She discarded the former. If she feigned she was dead, they may in anger, for losing a high profile price, pump bullets into her. She opted to be brought out from the car, and put in the Hilux. That was where she met the others earlier kidnapped.

Six men, wearing Police uniform did the job.

“I was not a target. I was not trailed. Nobody double-crossed my car. I was not on the Benin-Agbor road. It was in Benin city. I ran into them. Four people had been kidnapped before me. If I had delayed anywhere by 20 minutes, that would have saved us. They would have driven off before our arrival”.

The Joy Of The Kidnappers

As soon as they put her in the hilux, the first thing they did was to grab her wrist watch. They looked at it, they screamed. Their joy knew no bounds. These guys knew the make. Then, they grabbed her rings and her bangles, and screamed some more. They went back to her car, took her hand bag, saw the quality, and knew they had hit a jackpot. Then, they went back and grabbed her suit case. They took their time. Yet, the thousands of Security personnel in Benin – Military, Police, Civil Defence, Para- military – were nowhere near! God has buttered their bread, the abductors exclaimed. They, therefore, discarded the idea of waiting for some more victims. Justice Nwosu-Iheme was more than enough. They drove off, unchallenged. And this was inside Benin City!

They asked their five victims to bend down, as they drove on, just so nobody would see them and suspect anything. But there was no need. They knew their route. Until they got to their final destination, they met no military or police check-point.

Madam Justice, You Have Broken The Internet

Final destination was a house – completed, not uncompleted, as had been speculated.

By the next morning, they had known her identity, fully. Smart guys, they relied on the internet to follow reactions to their exploits of the previous day. The Social media provided that. It was awash with her very rich Curriculum Vitae. What they read gave them joy unlimited. A Judge of the Appeal Court. (They called it Appeal Supreme Court). Nigeria's first female Judge to have a PhD. Well respected and regarded. Holds the key to a city in the USA. Dotting husband. Well behaved children – all lawyers, medical doctor, engineer. Had handled high profile sensitive cases. What else? The Social media had it all. So, they told her: "Madam Justice, you have broken the internet. We thank God for providing you for us. We are happy you are in our midst. After you, we will not embark on any other job for the next six months. God has blessed us with you in our midst".

They Treated Her With Respect And Dignity

Once they confirmed her kidnap value, with the help of the Social Media, they knew they had to protect their high profile victim by all means.

So, they treated her with respect and reverence. She was neither blind-folded nor molested in anyway. For her sake, they extended same to the other abductees. Madam Justice, they called her. Atimes, with a bow.

They provided her with a new mattress. "Madam Justice, see it, it is a new mattress". They brought new bedsheets, told her same thing, tore the covering water-proof open before her to prove it's new. They brought new Ankara wrapper, and told her: "It is a new one, Madam Justice." She was wearing a boo-boo when she was abducted. So, the wrapper came in- handy. She could, at least, use it to ward off mosquitoes. There was no light.

They provided drinking water, and with apologies, told her: "We are sorry. We don't have bottled water here. We have pure water. Look at the label. It is a good one. We know you don't drink it, but manage it. You use you teeth to tear it open." I know, she told them.

Every morning, they would boil hot water for her to take her bath.

And, they regularly asked her what she wanted to eat. "There is bread, rice beans, yam, anything you want". She rejected all. But was grateful for the pure water. It would help her to re-hydrate. She had a small cut on the forehead which was bleeding. When they noticed it, they quickly put a call through to their boss. He asked them to quickly stop the bleeding. When she complained "of cough," they called their boss who asked them to urgently get her the best cough medicine. They did. But, she didn't take it.

Her Most Difficult Days

When they bought a new mattress for her, she knew she would be with them for a long time. But the first one week was her most difficult. Water was her most delicious food.

Where Is My Orderly? Tell Me The Truth, Did You Kill My Orderly?

Her Orderly.

After four days, one of them became friendly with her. On the fifth day, she asked him, “Where is my Orderly. Please, tell me the truth. Did you kill my Orderly?”

He answered her in the negative. “No, we did not kill him. We only took his AK 47 gun from him”.

Nwosu-Iheme was happy. She said she wanted both of them to tell the story of their ordeal together.

But, the next day, she asked him again: “Tell me the truth, did you kill my Orderly? The friendly kidnapper hesitated, and again denied. But She is a Judge. She understood. She broke down, and wept. For days, she wept non-stop, mourning her Orderly who she describes as the best.

But the other woman, who was earlier kidnapped, along with her daughter, scolded and consoled her both, at once. “Stop crying. Be consoled that you are alive. You will tell his family what happened. With the number of bullets fired at your car, it is a miracle you were not killed. So, stop”.

The remaining number of days she stayed with the kidnappers was a healing period for her to come to terms with the death of her Orderly. “I will miss him forever”, she says.

The Negotiation: They wanted Osinbajo’s Trader-moni

The negotiation for her release was long and tough. For the first four days, her abductors made no contact with her family. That almost killed them. Said her husband :”I was finished and walking on my head. I didn’t know what to tell our children, grown up as they are. I was very worried about them. My wife is very close to our children. Our grand children knew what happened, and were in tears , everyday. As for me, I was a finished man already.”

Then, the kidnappers called. They asked for a ransom of, wait for this, One Billion Naira! The haggling began. They came down to N500million. Every offer made was rejected. They said the Federal Government should bring the money. She told them she was not working for the FG, but the Judiciary. “Your car plate number bears FG”, they countered. Then, they told her that Vice President Osinbajo should pay them Trader-moni. President Buhari should order him to do so. When she told them it doesn’t work that way, they rained curses on both men. The day the NASS expressed concern over the new trend of abducting Judges, using her case as a peg, and asked for adequate protection for Judiciary officers, they called them useless people. “It is now that they know they need to protect them. Useless people”.

The Release Through A Tunnel And The Prayers With The Kidnappers

Finally, a compromise was reached. They called the family, Tuesday, guided them on what to do and told them she would be released somewhere in Benin, which would be communicated to them.

All through that Tuesday night, they did not communicate with the family. The whole of Wednesday morning and afternoon, nothing.

Night came, no calls. The family’s hope of a re-union they thought would be quick after “the settlement” was ebbing.

But the abductee said she knew she would be released that Wednesday. What she didn’t know was the time.

How: “They were happy. Very happy. And were anxious to move on. Every abductee, but one, had “done something”. Even at that, they didn’t mind. They had enough to cover his. So, why waste time?

At the appointed time they brought the five of them out, asked them to sit down. Then, the abductors called for prayers – prayers for God’s protection as they depart. They asked their victims if they were shocked that they too pray. To support their behaviour, they quoted the Bible, and told the story of Saul, who persecuted Christians, no end, but later repented, and even became a Saint – St Paul.

The harrowing journey to freedom began. It was through a tunnel. To go through it, they all had to bend down, guided by their abductors. It was a long stretch. At a point, her strength failed. She had not eaten for days. But God intervened. She trudged on. When they got to the end of the tunnel, there was a steaming vehicle, waiting for them.

They entered, and drove off at a break-neck, suicidal speed. Fear gripped them. “They had their hearts in their stomach” What if a trailer crushed them? But God was in charge.

They gave them N2,000 each, for transportation, and dropped them in the middle of nowhere. Three roads confronted them. One to Lagos, another to Benin, and the other to another town. They told their victims motorcyclists usually took that route. So, they stood there.

Soon motorcyclists began to drive-by.

The Good Samaritan

Justice Nwosu-Iheme took the first one. She was wearing a boo-boo, not comfortable for such a ride “This is my first time of taking an Okada. Please, take it easy, she appealed. He asked what they were doing at that lonely stretch. She told him they were kidnap victims, and asked to be dropped where she could get a taxi.

The motorcyclist turned out to be the biblican good Samaritan. He refused to take money from her. “Madam, they kidnap you, you came out, and you wan pay me. No ma.” Good young man, he waited until a taxi, carrying no other passenger came. She insisted on being the only occupant in any taxi.

Nwosu-Iheme was so touched by the man’s kindness that she asked him to write his phone number somewhere for her.

“For your kindness to me, when I get back to my family alive, by the grace of God, you will not be an Okada rider again. I will help you in life”, she told the motorcyclist. She is sticking to that promise.

Free At Last

She asked the taxi driver to take her to Protea Hotel, Benin. At the reception, she begged the receptionist to use their phone. She remembered her husband’s phone number. His youngest son, the negotiator, who suddenly became the voice of the family picked the call. When he heard his mother’s voice, he screamed: “Daddy, she is alive, she is free”.

Is She Bitter?

Not quite. But she is human. The killing of her Police Orderly is too much for her. It’s like a sore on the palm. She shudders each time she remembers him. And, it is often. Her Orderly’s family

members were worried about her, knowing how close they were. On her way back to Owerri the day after her release, she went to the Police station where her bullet-riddled car was parked. She wanted to look at the car where her Orderly died, for the last time.

She attributed the fate that befell her to God's wish, her destiny. God wanted to strengthen me, to show me His face and His love for me.

I owe Him. I will thank Him everyday of my life. It is thanksgiving to Him everyday.

"I love my job. And I love my country. I was appointed a Judge at a very young age. I have kept clean hands. I have never seen black and called it white. I have never seen white and called it black. In the shadows of death, I sang to God, I asked Him to judge me by my actions. God saw my heart, and saved me from the clutches of death. I appreciate Him.

May God bless our country. May God's name be praised ".

This is the second time the family would go through this harrowing experience. A couple of years back, one of her twin sons was kidnapped in Owerri.

=====

Mastermind Of Appeal Judge Kidnap In Benin Arrested By DSS

By The Nigeria Voice

The Department of State Services (DSS) has arrested a male suspect, Stanley Onoriode Ekemaye, who allegedly masterminded the abduction of Justice Chioma Nwosu-Iheme of the Court of Appeal, Benin division.

The Justice, who has since regained her freedom, was abducted on October 30, 2019 in Benin City. Her police orderly was assassinated by her abductors during the attack.

Ekemaye, who has been described as a "notorious kidnapper," was arrested by DSS in the early hours of Tuesday at Okwuzi Egbema in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni local government area of Rivers State.

Ekemaye, the secret police claimed had been coordinating robberies and kidnappings around the Delta, Edo and Rivers axis for years.