

Doctor Shot to Death After Singing 'Amazing Grace'

The British optician kidnapped and killed last month in Nigeria died in a hail of bullets after singing the hymn "Amazing Grace" to lift the spirits of his fellow hostages, two of them said.

Ian Squire, 57, was killed instantly by shots fired by one of four gang members who abducted him and three other aid workers from their clinic in the country's lawless southern Delta region on 13 October, the U.K.'s *Telegraph* newspaper reports.

David Donovan, a doctor, and his wife, Shirley, a teacher, set up a medical training charity, New Foundations, and four years ago teamed up with Ian Squire, who ran his own eyesight charity, Mission for Vision.

The circumstances surrounding Squire's death were not made clear in accounts published earlier this month when the other three hostages were released, and some suggested he had died of an asthma attack.

However, his fellow hostages told *The Telegraph* he was killed on their first morning in captivity—in a 16 by 10-foot bamboo hut in a remote swamp.

David Donovan said: "We asked if [Ian] could play a song or sing a hymn. He said the only thing he could do without chord sheets was 'Amazing Grace.'

"So we sang that together. And at the end of it, three of us were sitting on the mattress, and Ian was standing up. And as he was standing up, we heard two single shots and then a salvo. Ian died instantly.

"The three of us jumped immediately into the flood and hid

behind a pillar of this small hut.”

The couple said the gunmen never explained why they opened fire. The gang were part of a cult named after Egbesu, a local warrior god, and spent much of their time drunk and smoking marijuana and pipefuls of cocaine, *The Telegraph* reported. A manhunt is underway for the gang, known locally as the Egbesu Boys. Several have already been arrested or killed but the leader, Karowei Gbakumor, whose followers refer to him as “The General,” is still at large.

David Donovan said Squire had trained local staff to make prescription glasses using a bespoke lens-cutting machine he had made for use in remote areas, a service unavailable elsewhere in impoverished Delta state. He paid tribute to his professional achievements as “outstanding” and “revolutionary.”

“Ian was a man of faith ... He was a man who was really hungry to know more of God and lived his life with that main purpose at the forefront,” David Donovan said.

Three weeks after Squire’s death, in early November, the Donovans, along with a fourth hostage, Alanna Carson, a Scottish optometrist, were released following the payment of a ransom, believed to have come from the Nigerian government.

David Donovan said he hoped the clinic would remain open. Earlier this month, locals held a demonstration against the gang, amid fears that the kidnappings and Squire’s death would lead to the clinic’s closure. But he added that local staff they trained “can more or less run the clinic without us now anyway, which was always our aim”. {eo}

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