Ondo cleric, wife held over fake kidnap

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Ondo cleric, wife held over fake kidnap  
  
Operatives of the Ondo State Police Command have apprehended a cleric, and his wife in Ondo, the headquarters of Ondo West Local Government Area, for allegedly staging a ‘fake kidnap’ to extort money from their relatives.  
  
The suspects, Pastor Sanmori Olubumi Joshua (62) and Mrs Sanmori Taiwo (42), residents of Road 5, Powerline in Ondo, were apprehended after their plot was uncovered.  
  
In a statement yesterday in Akure, the spokesman for the state Police Command, Olayinka Ayanlade, said the incident occurred on August 23, between 4:00 p.m and 5:00 p.m.  
  
According to Ayanlade, Taiwo hid in a room in their house while her husband (the cleric) used her mobile phone to contact relatives, claiming she had been abducted by gunmen.  
  
He said the suspect allegedly demanded N10 million ransom for the release of his wife.  
  
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The police spokesman added that one of the relatives, Fasegha Joseph, became suspicious of the claims and petitioned the Commissioner of Police, Adebowale Lawal, who assigned the case to the Special Anti-Kidnapping Squad.  
  
He added that a joint team from the squad and the Enu-Owa Division stormed the couple’s residence in Ondo, where the pastor’s wife was found.  
  
“She initially lied that she had been released after a ransom of ₦5 million was paid,” Deputy Superintendent of Police Olayinka said.  
  
“However, upon further interrogation, she confessed that the self-kidnap was staged in connivance with her husband to extort money from her relatives abroad.”  
  
The police spokesperson added that the suspects admitted their motive was to settle debts and cater for their needs.  
  
Both suspects are in custody and will be charged to court.  
  
Lawal warned against such criminal antics, stressing that the command would not tolerate any form of crime, whether genuine or staged.  
  
“This case shows that the police will unravel any plot meant to disturb public peace. We urge members of the public to continue to give credible information, which will always be treated with confidentiality,” he added.  
  
The command commended the residents for their cooperation and reaffirmed its commitment to protecting lives and property across the state.