

**EFCC arrest  
Benue Accountant  
General, others**

- Page 2



**A trip  
to  
Geneva**

- Pages 24 & 25

## Funsho Williams murder PDP stalwart stabbed, strangled



Late Funsho Williams

**M**urdered People's Democratic Party (PDP), stalwart, Funsho Williams, was stabbed and then strangled in his home in Ikoyi, Lagos, his family said yesterday.

Four people have been arrested in connection with the murder, including two close confidants of Mr. Williams and two mobile police officers, party sources told newsmen at the Park View compound.

The arrest of the police officers was confirmed by police yesterday. The Inspector General of Police and the Lagos state governor visited the scene of the crime yesterday.

Police spokesman, Haz Iwendi, who said the 58-year-old member of the PDP had been tied up in his study and then stabbed, before being strangled.

A member of the family who spoke with our correspondent said he was killed in the early hours of

From Adelanwa Bamgboye & Olumide Bajulaiye, Lagos

yesterday morning. Engr. Williams returned from a PDP meeting at 3 am.

The brother who was in a very distressed state, said: "At about 8am this morning, his cook came to call him that his food was ready, but a member of his campaign

**- Police**

organization said the cook should not worry and that Funsho was upstairs dressing up.

"After 30 minutes and he did not come down, we then decided to go up and see him.

It was then we found his mutilated body in his bedroom," he said.

Two of the people who were either resident in his

Cont. on Pg. 4

**Awoniyi, Na'abba,  
others condemn killing**

**T**he murder of Funsho Williams has been described as "unfortunate" and "a pointer to turbulent times ahead" by political players.

Speaking to *Daily Trust* yesterday, Chairman of the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF), Chief Sunday Awoniyi, said he was in shock. He said: "What does anybody gain by doing this type of thing? How does it further the fortunes of our democracy?" he asked.

Awoniyi noted that the murder of Williams is a bad omen and one that has etched politically motivated murder in the nation's politics.

He said: "I cannot understand this thing and that it can happen with this frightening rapidity, almost on a daily basis with such ease, I feel sorry for his family, friends and the nation in general".

He said that there was need for the complete

By Emmanuel Bello  
overhaul of the system and a "rapid sanitization of the security apparatus".

Similarly, former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Ghali Umar Na'abba, said the incident is a dangerous signal to others in the race for political office. "It is a dangerous trend as we approach next year. The deceased is a top political gladiator in the politics of Lagos state and his death cannot be divorced from politics."

Hon. Na'abba said: "The police are not doing much and this is getting worse. You will remember that there was an attempt on the life of an ACD aspirant. One was killed in Jos. The truth is that Nigerians are under siege. I just hope that the authorities will do something about this type of thing."

But according to former

Inspector General of Police, Ibrahim Coomassie, the blame is not entirely that of the police. "This is a sad development and the police should do all it can do to get to the root of this matter. But it is not entirely the fault of the police. It is the failure of the entire system. Assassination, by their nature are not easy to foil because it is a few people who get together to plan them. It cannot be easily nipped."

Coomassie said the political class should desist from the cut throat competition they engage in for power seeking, noting that in the long run, only the politicians can "save themselves by exercising caution"

Don Etiebet said: "It is tragic, sordid, unbelievable and alarming. Why should politicians focus on each other instead of going to the

Cont. on Pg. 4

## Lagos places N10m bounty on killers

**T**he Lagos state government has announced a N10million reward for any individual, group of people or institutions that could give clues leading to the arrest and prosecution of those who murdered Engineer Funsho Williams.

In a state-wide broadcast to the people of the state over the sad incident, Governor

From Olumide Bajulaiye, Lagos

Bola Tinubu declared that the state will "leave no stone unturned in sending a clear signal to all and sundry that political gangsterism, violence, annihilation and immolation will not be tolerated in the state."

The governor also banned all political rallies in the state for the next two

weeks, while calling on the police not to grant any permit to political parties seeking to organise any rally within the stipulated time.

While condoling with families and children of the late politician, Tinubu said his administration will do everything possible to ensure that Lagos state is not turned into a war zone for the spilling

Cont. on Pg. 4

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## News

## Funsho Williams murder

PDP Cont. from pg. 1

estate or were in the house that morning have been arrested by the police including a member of his campaign organization, senior party figures emerging from the house said yesterday.

Two of his mobile police guard have also been arrested, according to sources within the compound.

Police would not confirm the arrests, at the time of going to press.

Worried by the circumstances surrounding his death, chieftains of the party including family member prevented any member of the police or journalists from entering the house itself, but journalists were later allowed into the compound.

Prior to his assassination, there had been series of attacks by political thugs in some of the rallies held last weekend in Lagos in which at least four people were shot dead.

Investigations revealed that the party National Vice Chairman South Chief Olabode George had to put off the suppose rally that was to be held as a result of the incident.

Engineer Funsho Williams had on two occasions, contested the exalted governor's seat in Lagos and lost. The last time was during the 2003 general elections which he contested but lost to the incumbent governor, Bola Tinubu of the Alliance for Democracy (AD).

Investigations revealed that the party hierarchy had rooted for him to fly its flag in the 2003 governorship elections in the Lagos.

When our correspondent visited his residence, a mammoth crowd of sympathizers gathered there to show their support for the family. Party chieftains were seen driving in, in a hurried manner without any comments. It is understood that his body was still in the house until late in the afternoon before it was taken out by ambulance.

An astute politician, Williams started his political career after a career in the civil service in the early 90s. He was a staunch member and leading gubernatorial aspirant of the defunct United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP) before the end of military rule after the death of Gen. Sani Abacha.

Abacha's death put a momentary stop to his guber ambition until 1999 during the Gen. Abdulasalami Abubakar transition. He joined the AD where he slugged it out with other contenders. Although he lost the guber primaries he joined Tinubu during his electioneering campaigns.

He later decamped to the ruling PDP. He was fielded as the gubernatorial candidate of the PDP in the 2003 elections where he lost narrowly to his former party colleague, Bola Tinubu. He was said to be the

leading gubernatorial aspirant of the PDP in Lagos State until his gruesome murder by suspected assassins.

Police have suggested the murderer of Funsho Williams was an invited guest to his house.

Mr. Williams, 58, had "adequate protection" and was "properly secured" the night of his murder, a spokesman for the Nigerian Police Force has said.

But Mr. Williams regularly invited visitors to the house late at night on a Thursday, force spokesman, Haz Iwendi, told journalists.

Williams was found strangled and stabbed in his study by family members yesterday morning.

Mr. Iwendi confirmed two of his police guards have been arrested.

Mr. Iwendi said: "Engineer Funsho Williams was properly secured because he was provided with adequate security by the police."

"But last night, assassins made their way into his house in Ikoyi, Lagos and tied his hands and legs stabbing him severally in the chest. He was later strangled."

He was attended to by four police guards at his house, police said.

The police spokesman said that before Engr. Funsho Williams was killed, he had visitors in his Park View estate home until 1 00am every Thursday morning. He said: "You can't read the mind of a murderer."

The FPRO disclosed that the Inspector General of Police (IGP), Mr. Sunday Ehindero, was already in Lagos in a bid to get to the root of the murder incident.

Prominent Yoruba leaders have reacted to the killing.

The *Afenifere* spokesman, Mr. Yinka Odumakin, described the murder of Funsho Williams as "politically motivated," saying that it was an unfortunate development, adding that the *Afenifere* has lost another member who decamped to the PDP.

Odumakin explained that when the late Chief Bola Ige decamped from *Afenifere* to the PDP, he (Ige) never came back alive, adding that the *Afenifere* has lost another member who decamped to the PDP.

The *Afenifere* also called upon the federal government to institute a judicial probe to unravel those behind the murder. According to *Afenifere*, Engr. Funsho Williams does not deserve a violent death.

The *Afenifere* spokesman also called for the resignation of the IGP. According to Odumakin, since the IG ought to have retired, he has no business being in that office again and he is tired with no fresh ideas. "They just put him there to rig the next elections," Odumakin suggested.

## A Litany of assassinations since 1999

By Hammeed M. Bello

Since the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo took over the affairs of the country in 1999, there have been several cases of suspected politically motivated killings, and

various forms of attacks.

Notable government officials, opposition politicians and political aspirants have been killed, physically

attacked or abducted.

Most of the attackers have never been revealed by the security agencies or properly brought to justice.

Although the authorities are quick to attribute most of

the attacks to the activities of armed robbers, there have been suspicions by members of the public that the killings might have been politically motivated.

For instance, former Minister of Justice, Chief Bola Ige, was killed in questionable circumstances in his Oyo state home in 2001.

Former Senate President, the late Chuba Okadigbo, died after suffering from the effects of tear gas fired on him by the police during a rally in Kano in 2003. The late Chuba was campaigning as the running mate to General Muhammadu Buhari in the 2003 presidential elections when the police fired tear gas canisters to disperse the political rally. Chuba, an asthmatic patient, inhaled the harmful tear gas that eventually led to his death.

A notable politician, Chief Harry Marshal was killed in his bedroom in the city center of Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory, in February 2003, by suspected assassins.

Armed men broke into his house in the night through the ceiling after disarming his night guards and seizing all valuables including cell phones. The suspected assassins of Marshal were arrested by the police, but not much has been heard since then.

In February 2004, the former National Vice Chairman, South, of the PDP, Chief Aminasoari Dikibo, was shot while driving in his car in the presence of his police orderly. The official explanation was that he was attacked by robbers.

Recently, the chairman of the Advanced Congress of Democrats (ACD), in Plateau state Mr. Jesse Aruku, who was aspiring for the governorship of the state in 2007, was killed.

The wife of Alh. Abubakar Rimi, a board of trustee member of the PDP, was killed recently in Kano.

The national chairman of the ACD, Chief Alexis Aniello, was last weekend attacked, robbed, stripped naked and his car stolen by some hoodlums suspected to have been hired. Two years ago, a notable Benue politician was shot along Lafia road and the circumstances of his death still remains a mystery.

A bomb scare was said to have been recorded in the residence of the Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon Austin Opara, and the interpretation was that his political adversaries were at work.



Lagosian reeling in shock over Williams' murder

Lagos Cont. from pg. 1

of blood for political purposes.

His words: "Lagos state has been peaceful because we always encourage idea-driven politics, the politics of debate over issues and policy options. We have never witnessed any political assassination in our state. This alleged assassination therefore poses a clear and present danger to the peace-loving people of our state and threatens the cordial atmosphere under which citizens can seek to represent the people and canvass for votes."

"I assure Lagosians that

everything will be done to unravel the mystery surrounding this dastardly act and bring the perpetrators to book."

Tinubu therefore, called on the police and other agencies to move speedily to unravel the murder before the perpetrators erase their trails.

According to Tinubu, the country has witnessed so many unresolved murders, "till date we still do not know who killed the nation's former Justice Minister, Chief Bola Ige. We do not know those who killed Harry Marshal and Dikkibo of the PDP."

"This failure to unravel

the murders may have encouraged this dangerous trend and unwittingly assured the masterminders that they can get away."

Lagos State helmsman said: "If Nigeria is going to witness a free and fair election, an election that will not be determined by how many guns and goons a candidate is able to acquire, the police must rise up to the challenge of this murder and bring the perpetrators to book now."

He therefore used the opportunity to call on all the political aspirants of all the parties to embark on the re-orientation of their members on the virtues of politics without hate, harassment and blood spilling.

"If indeed all we seek to do is to serve the people, then we should not engage in acts which undermine the democratic process."

He described Engineer Funsho Williams as a none violent politician, having had the privilege of campaigning with him as members of the Alliance for Democracy and against him as his challenger on the platform of the PDP in the 2003 elections, saying "none of our campaigns degenerated into violence."

"We therefore condemn this despicable act in all its entirety. Lagos state will not tolerate the insipid politics of violence that is prevalent in other places. We shall combat political assassination with all the might that this state can mobilize".

Awoniye

electorates who will vote them into office?"

Describing the late Williams as a religious man, Etiebet who defected to the ruling PDP, said the former gubernatorial aspirant in Lagos state eschewed the politics of violence. "He was a humble engineer who did his politics as if it was engineering. He was a devout catholic who was practically harmless."

On his own part, former Minister of Information, Prince Tony Momoh, said political assassinations may become a permanent fixture.

He said: "This is an embarrassing reminder of what lies in wait as we approach 2007. Nigerian politicians have been encouraged to take politics as a full time business."

He said: "The solution is to decongest the political

Cont. from pg. 1

space so that law making can take the form it did in the first republic".

The Democratic Peoples Party (DPP), has also described it as "dreadful". Speaking to *Daily Trust*, Director of Publicity, Ismail Sani, said that the act was condemnable. He called on the government to investigate and identify the "perpetrators of this dastardly act and ensure justice is done."

Similarly, the Advanced Congress of Democrats (ACD), pointed out that the murder was totally unnecessary and urged politicians to work together. Calling for an all political summit, the party regretted the recent wave of politically motivated murders, noting that an ACD leader, Jesse Aruku, was in like manner, murdered in Plateau State.