

How police teargas killed my only child who just graduated — Mother

From Afeez Hanafi, Lagos

A 24-year-old National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) member, Gafar Wahab Adeniji, has died of complications arising from teargas he reportedly inhaled during the demolition of structures at Otto community, a slum in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area, and its environs.

It was learnt that some policemen had led a group of alleged land speculators to the community on Friday, March 22, firing teargas canisters to scare the people away.

Many structures built with planks were reportedly set ablaze and scores of residents displaced.

Daily Trust gathered that ailing Gafar, who was at home alone recuperating, inhaled teargas and became unconscious.

Gafar's mother, Kuburat Adeniji, told our correspondent on Monday that she was at her shop when the demolition started, lamenting that her son's condition had worsened before he could get help from neighbours.

She said, "My son was sleeping at home when the police started firing teargas (canisters). I quickly left the shop and went home to check on him because he had been sick.

"Everywhere was filled with teargas. By the time I entered our room, he was already choked and struggling to breathe. I called for help and he was rescued. We took him to a hospital in Ikorodu.

"The doctor complained that he inhaled some substance in the room and I told him it was teargas. The doctor later referred him to Sagamu Teaching Hospital in Ogun State. We were taking him there on April 2 when he

died.

"He just graduated and was serving in Ogun State. He was transferred to Lagos recently when he fell sick so that I could look after him. He was recovering at home when the police led thugs to demolish houses in the community.

"It was the teargas he inhaled that triggered his crisis and eventually killed him. He was 24 in March and my only child. He was easy-going.

"I don't have any means of getting justice. I have left everything to God. If his father was alive, I would have had someone to lean on."

A leader in the community, Mr Musbau Agbodemu, alleged that the demolition was carried out without notice under the police watch, adding that the exercise violated a court order.

"The young man was teargassed to death when the police led armed thugs to demolish buildings in four communities in Lagos Mainland Local Government Area. Some of them wore masks. Up till now, thugs are still drafted to the community day and night.

"The community had been facing arson and threats before now. A similar thing happened in 2010 when one person was burnt to death at night. The Lagos State Government and the then Commissioner of Police intervened. We took the case to the Lagos High Court in Igbosere in 2013 and the court stopped the demolition," he said.

The police spokesperson in the state, SP Benjamin Hundeyin, did not pick calls to his line and had yet to reply to a text message sent to him as regards the March 22 incident.