



# THE GUARDIAN

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N150

## Funso Williams assassinated

**A**NOTHER gruesome killing raised the political temperature in Lagos yesterday.

Third-time aspirant to the state's governorship seat, and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chief-in-charge, Engineer Funso Williams, lost the desire to achieve his dream to cold-blooded murder. He was strangled to death at his 184B Corporation Drive home in Dolphin

Estate, Ikoyi, Lagos. His wife and children were said to have travelled to London last week.

The death has added to the long list of curious murders in Nigeria since the return of civil rule in 1999.

The assailants left no doubt that their mission was to take the life of the prominent engineer and politician in a most violent manner. They tied

By Farotimi Oluwale, Biodun Fanoro, Blessing Eghagha, Idowu Ajanaku, Ayoyinka Olagoke and Onyedika Agbedo (Lagos) and Charles Coffie Gyamfi (Abeokuta)

his legs and hands, before strangling him in his bedroom. He was also stabbed several times, according to his family members.

It was learnt that Williams had arrived from a political rally at about 3.00 a.m. yesterday before retiring to his bed-

room.

Sources said that the deceased could have

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been murdered between 6.00 a.m. and 10 a.m. It was also learnt that when his cook wanted to go in and invite him for his breakfast, she was driven

back by one of his political campaign members who said that the late politician was dressing and would not be able to see her.

Another member of the family, amidst tears, informed *The Guardian* that the assailants never gave their victim any opportunity although he pleaded with them for mercy.

It was learnt that seven

people, including four policemen, one political aide, two security details and his cook in the house have been arrested by the police.

Another confirmed to our reporter that as at the time the assailants entered Williams' bedroom, none of the four mobile policemen guarding him was around.

This, according to sympathisers, is reminiscent

of the way the former Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Chief Bola Ige (SAN), was assassinated in 2002.

Thousands of his supporters and party loyalists thronged the house, wailing and raining curses on the suspected assassins. Some of the supporters, who wore the deceased's T-shirts, ran to the house

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### The captain from school to politics

By Clifford Ndujihe

**F**UNSHO Williams was born on May 9, 1948 to the late Olu Williams (KCOB), who served the Nigerian Railways for over 30 years and Ibidun (QCOG), alias Mama Red Cross, who is now about 85 years.

He attended St. Paul's Roman Catholic School, Ebute Metta (1954); St. Gregory's College, Obalende (1962), the University of Lagos (UNILAG) (1968) and New Jersey Institute of Technology (1971).

At schools sport, Williams excelled in shot put when in 1964, he represented Lagos at the Hussey Shield Competition in Enugu. He later became the undisputed schoolboy champion in both the Shot Put and Discus events at competitions staged in Lagos, Ibadan, Warri and Kaduna for four consecutive years.

In Form Three, he broke the 50-foot barrier in the Shot Put. In 1968, he became the captain of the Lagos State Secondary School Hussey Shield Track and Field team and put up a five-star performance.

Today, his "The Captain" nickname in political circles of Lagos was as a result of that performance.

Williams won two gold medals in Shot Put and Discus at the West African Universities Games in Sierra Leone.

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• Funso Williams

### Nigeria's long list of curious deaths

**T**HE list of suspected political killings in Nigeria, since the return of civil rule in 1999, is long; very long. In all the cases, neither the killers, nor their sponsors have been brought to justice.

The most prominent of them have been the gruesome murders of the then Minister of Justice and Attorney-General of the Federation, Chief James

Ajibola Ige, on December 23, 2001; the National Vice Chairman (South-South) of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Chief Aminosoari Diki-bo; a chieftain of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), Chief Marshall Harry; and a couple, Barnabas and Abigail Igwe.

There were also the unresolved murders of

Mr. Victor Nwankwo, younger brother of prominent politician, Arthur; Ogbonnaya Uche and Theodore Agwatu, among others.

The killers of Ige literally waltzed into his home as his security operatives were conveniently away. Some of the assassins, at gun-point, herded the then minister's household

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• Sympathisers at the Ikoyi, Lagos home of the late Williams... yesterday.

PHOTO: TAIWO ONI

### Lagos bans rallies, offers N10m for information on assassins

**F**OR any veritable clue to getting the assassins of Chief Funso Williams, the informant would get N10 million. The reward price was named yesterday by Lagos State Governor Bola Ahmed Tinubu while banning political rallies for two weeks in the state.

Tinubu, who described the manner of Williams' murder as "barbaric and gruesome," told reporters at his Alausa office that the perpetrators would not be allowed to get away with "this evil deed."

The governor consoled with the bereaved family, especially the widow and his children, and pledged that everything possible would be done to ensure that Lagos State is not turned into a war zone.

By Farotimi Oluwale, Alex Olise and Odita Sunday

"I assure Lagosians that everything will be done to unravel the mystery surrounding this dastardly act and bring the perpetrators to book". He said the government and people of Lagos State hereby call on the Nigeria Police and other security agencies to move speedily to unravel this alleged murder before the perpetrators erase their trails."

Tinubu enjoined politicians and leadership of all political parties to embark on 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 can undermine the democratic process.

The governor was emphatic that political gangsterism, violence, annihilation and immolation will not be tolerated in Lagos State.

"We cherish our peace, tranquillity and economic progress. We shall miss Engineer Funso Williams because of the virtues that he demonstrated", he declared.

The governor proceeded to ban all political rallies in the state for the next two weeks to honour Funso Williams.

Tinubu charged the Nigerian Police to rise up to the challenge by unravelling the perpetrators of the murder, as it would be one of the major planks on which

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### Gowon lists benefits of multi-party system

By Rotimi Lawrence Oyekanmi

titled: "Issues of Governance for Nation States of Africa: Pathways for Leadership Development."

According to him, a true multi-party democracy must clearly distinguish between the party and the government, and it must respect the wishes of the people.

Gowon argued that

**F**ORMER Military Head of State, Gen. Yakubu Gowon (rtd), yesterday declared that true democracy could only be achieved under a multi-party system where various national interests and groups could find a platform for expression.

Reviewing how the country evolved from the colonial period through independence to the present democratic dispensation, Gowon declared

that part of the recurrent political problems facing Nigeria originated from the amalgamation of 1914, which, he said, the colonial rulers carried out without dissolving the individual characteristics of the different components into one.

Gowon aired his views at the first convocation lecture of Covenant University, which took place at Ota, Ogun State, yesterday. The lecture was

since legitimacy is one of the products of effective governance, it can never exist where there is extensive personalisation of power, denial of fundamental human rights, widespread corruption, prevalence of un-elected structures, disrespect for the rule of law and unaccountable government.

To him, legitimacy is not only about ascension to power, but also how power relates to the peo-

ple who have voluntarily surrendered it and offered support to the leadership in place.

The former head of state counselled that in determining who to elect as a leader, the electorate should look for the combined qualities of high morality, self-confidence, charisma, good character, commitment, competence, courage and focus.

Other qualities to be desired, he said, are gen-

erosity, initiative, security, willingness to learn, ability to teach and instruct, compassion, vision and humility.

Gowon said: "A good leader's thought must continually be about the good of the people, asking himself the question whether what he is doing and the laws he is making for the society are fair and just. The leader

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# ASSASSINATION OF FUNSHO WILLIAMS

## Lagos offers N10m for information on killers

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the country would successfully conduct free general elections in 2007.

He lamented that the country had witnessed many unresolved murder cases in the past, saying that this might explain why the perpetrators had

been emboldened to continue to carry out the dastardly act.

He noted that the state had not witnessed any political killing under the present political dispensation and said that this ugly trend must be arrested if politicians still intend to go before the electorate to seek votes.

The political terrain in the state was tense yes-

terday following the gruesome murder. The Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Sunday Ehindero, arrived in Lagos at about 4 p.m. and ordered the arrest of the two policemen stationed at the gate of Williams' residence and a personal security.

Shortly after visiting the home, Ehindero called an emergency meeting in his official residence at

Queens Drive also in Ikoyi, which was attended by the Assistant Inspector-General of Police Zone 2, Mr. Adeayo Adeoye, the State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Emmanuel Adebayo and other top officers from Abuja and Lagos.

Report filtered last night that protesters stormed the residence of a known opponent of the late Williams, to set it

ablaze.

The IG therefore directed the commissioner of police to deploy mobile policemen to beef-up security in the entire Victoria Island and the residence of Williams. Force Public Relations Officer, Mr. Haz Iwendi, spoke to journalists on the murder.

He said: "Engineer Funsho Williams was strangled to death. He was not shot, his two legs and

hands were tied until he gave up the ghost.

"This happened between the hours of 11p.m. (Wednesday) and yesterday morning; the two policemen on duty have been arrested for interrogation."

Police sources told *The Guardian* that some politicians might be quizzed over the murder.

Giving more insight into how police might investigate the case, Iwendi said: "We are working on many leads because there was information that last night (Wednesday) that the late Williams received some of his party members at about 11p.m. and this was the exact time the incident occurred."

He, however, refused to speak more since he has taken over investigation.

The late politician's last public outing was on Wednesday, when the meeting between PDP members and the AIG Zone 2, Adeoye, held over the many crises of the party and threat to peace. The police boss admonished them to eschew violence ahead of the coming elections.

A large crowd of supporters besieged Williams' residence. They all wailed endlessly. One of the tearful voices said: "They have just killed the man who would have turned Lagos into better place."

## A captain from school to politics

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As a result, he was among the first set of inductees into the UNILAG Sports Hall of Fame in 2005.

His sports exploits did not affect his academics. He left secondary school with seven Alphas and had three passes in Science at London University "A Levels", in Lower Sixth Form in 1967.

As a kid in Ebute Metta, Williams mingled with children of different ethnic, religious backgrounds and status. And he had as friends the likes of Wilfred Imoudu (Edo State), Anthony Boyo (Delta State) and Fola Daniyan (Niger State), Kalu Idika Kalu, Philip Asiodu, Helen Boyo (now Mrs. Alex Ekwueme) and her brother Monsignor C. Boyo and Cyprian

Ekwensi.

It was not therefore surprising that he ended up marrying someone from Ndoni in Rivers State. Last year, his second son married Walter Oforogoro's daughter, who is from Amaigbo in Imo State.

Fresh from America in 1974 after his Masters Degree, Williams joined the Lagos Civil Service. By the time he retired in December 1991 as Director-General (Permanent Secretary), he had been for 12 years the team leader responsible for the construction of about 70 per cent of Lagos State roads and bridges.

The projects included the completion of the Third Mainland Bridge, Lekki-Epe Expressway, Gbaji-Aseri Road, dualisation of Ikorodu Road from Ketu to Owode Onirin, Iju-Jonathan-Coker Road, Babs Ani-

mashaun Street, Oworonsoki Road, Demurin Street, Alapere Road, Eric Moore Road, Orile Road, Alfa-Nla Road dualisation, Bolaji Johnson Road, Lateef Jakande Road, Idimu-LASU Road, Carter Bridge (West Ramp), pedestrian bridges (LASU, LACOED, Iporin, Charity Bus Stop, Adesina), Ajah-Badore-Langbasa Road, Offin-Oreta Road.

He also handled flyovers on Mobolaji Bank Anthony, Kodesoh-Oba-Akran, Isolo-Egbe Road and Ijesha Road as a civil servant.

Later, for about 30 months between 1994 and 1996, he was the Commissioner for Works in Lagos.

He served as a director in Julius Berger and Cappa D'Alberto, two construction giants in Nigeria.

Until his death, Williams

was the chairman of the National Maritime Authority.

As a grassroots politician, Williams was used to networking. His political machine, the Network Alliance, was as at various times in the defunct United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP), the Alliance for Democracy (AD) and now the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

In the UNCP, the structure produced about 30 of 40 members of the Lagos State House of Assembly that never sat. And in the AD in 1999, most of the House of Assembly members cut their political teeth in the Network Alliance.

Williams decamped to the PDP along with his followers on February 17, 2001 at the Tafawa Balewa Square after alleged maltreatment in the AD.

## Lagos PDP governorship aspirant, Williams, killed

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from two rallies that the late Williams was billed to address at the Lagos Island, and Eti-Osa areas of the state. He had been attacked at the weekend at a rally in Ikorodu, another area of the state.

Attempts by reporters to gain entrance into the house were stopped by policemen who said that they were carrying out forensic tests on the body.

A sympathiser, who gave his name as Olanrewaju Sarumi, said: "The state chairman of the PDP celebrated his birthday on Wednesday after which he came home and had a meeting with his campaign organisation until about 2.00 a.m. before going to bed."

The late Williams decamped from the Alliance for Democracy (AD) to the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) after losing the AD's governorship ticket to Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu in the 1999 election.

He was the PDP's governorship candidate in 2003 and lost again to Tinubu and was still gunning for the post before the violent murder yesterday.

The Deputy South National Chairman of the PDP, Chief Olabode George, yesterday ordered the cancellation of the party's political rally slated for Eti Osa Local Council.

George also summoned an emergency meeting

of the party's chieftains to fashion out the next line of action.

The Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Sunday Ehindero, flew in from Abuja yesterday afternoon at about 3.00 p.m. With the Lagos State Commissioner of Police (CP), Emmanuel Adebayo, Ehindero joined other sympathisers who trooped to the house of the deceased.

There had been attacks and counter-attacks by supporters of PDP governorship aspirants at Badagry, Ikorodu and Kosofe recently.

Williams joined politics after his career in state's civil service in the 90s. He was a staunch member and the governorship aspirant in the defunct United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP).

As at 3.00 p.m. yesterday afternoon, the Dolphin Estate home of the late PDP chieftain had been sealed by heavily armed mobile policemen.

Police vehicles were parked at strategic points, keeping at bay vehicles that usually passed through the estate. Cars formed a long queue along the usually busy Osborne road. The atmosphere that pervaded the entire compound and the adjoining streets leading to the house was that of shock, apprehension and subdued anger.

Delta State Governor James Ibori is saddened by this dastardly act

which, he said, was unacceptable. He called security agencies to track down the perpetrators. He noted that Nigerians must be vigilant as "we get into an election year."

The Ogun State Governor, Otunba Gbenga Daniel, described Williams' death as a devastating blow to Nigeria's democracy.

Daniel, who said the news was broken to him at an official engagement, described the act as an extremely dangerous dimension to security of lives in the country.

The governor, in a statement signed on his behalf by his Senior Assistant on Information and Strategy, Mr. Sina Ogunbambo, described the deceased as a perfect gentleman, a refined politician, an accomplished technocrat, and an ardent believer in the cause of democracy.

He said: "The deceased was a dogged fighter in his noble aspiration to become the Governor of Lagos State."

Daniel tasked the security agencies not to leave any stone unturned in unmasking those behind the brutal murder.

He commiserated with President Olusegun Obasanjo, the bereaved family and people of Lagos State.

An AD legislator from Lagos State, Senator Tokunbo Afikuyomi, said that the manner of killing was a pointer to

the fact that the PDP was full of dangerous politicians.

"Today, the dark veil of gloom has again been drawn over the Nigerian polity with the mindless assassination this morning of a PDP gubernatorial aspirant, Engineer Funsho Williams, at his Ikoyi residence in Lagos", Afikuyomi declared in a press statement.

He continued: "I write on behalf of the leaders and people of the Lagos West Senatorial District to express our condolences to the families of the deceased, whose life was perhaps an epitome of decency and restraint in the art of political engagements."

Expressing dismay at the murder, the Senator said: "It is still indiscernible why anyone or group would imagine and visit such violent act on a man who played politics with dignity and respect for the dissenting views of others. Today, the agents of death within the PDP have vindicated Nobel Laureate, Prof. Wole Soyinka that the party is indeed nothing but 'a nest of killers'."

Afikuyomi added: "I respectfully demand that the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Sunday Ehindero will honour the soul of the murdered politician by speedily tracking down his killers and bring them to justice rather than populate the data

base of unresolved political assassinations with yet the murder of Engineer Funsho Williams.

"Nigerians have not forgotten the many unanswered questions still raised by the brutal assassinations of the late Justice Minister, Chief Bola Ige, Aminosari Dikikibo, Harry Marshall, the Anambra State NBA Chairman, the Kogi State PDP Chairman and other notable citizens during the ignoble reign of the PDP."

The Oyo State government reacted in a similar manner. A statement by the special adviser to the state governor, Mr. Diran Odeyemi, described Williams as "an enigma and a political icon whose horizon was cut short by evil people."

Odeyemi said that the governor, Adebayo Alao-Akala called on security operatives to ensure that "the planners and executors of Engineer Williams are unmasked."

The governor was further quoted as calling for an end to political killings.

"There is need to put political killings to a permanent stop else, Nigeria's politics will remain a dirty game where decent men and women will not like to participate" Alao-Akala observed.

He prayed to God to grant the late Williams eternal rest and forgive him all his sins.

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# A list of curious deaths

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into a room. The others made for his room where they shot the 71 year-old prominent politician, also a former governor and watched him die.

On February 6, 2004, unknown assailants killed Chief Aminasoari K. Dikibo, the former national vice-chairman of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). He was killed on his way to a zonal party meeting in Asaba, Delta State.

On March 7, 2004, Chief Philip Olorunnipa, the chairman of the Kogi State Electoral Commission, was killed in his home in Adumo Kabba. Four days earlier, Luke Shigaba, the former Bassa LGA chairman, was also killed.

Also on October 12, 2004, a prominent aviation activist and former president of the National Association of Pilots and Engineers, Jerry Agbeyegebe, was shot and killed.

The killers of Barnabas Igwe, the Onitsha branch chairman of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), and his wife, Abigail, in Onitsha on September 1, 2000, were spectacular in their brutality.

They blocked the couple's car at a busy intersection in the early evening, then dealt each several machete cuts and shot them repeatedly. The killers then lay their bodies on the road and rode over them with a car before escaping into the dusk. Abigail was pregnant.

On August 15, 2002, the chairman of the PDP in Kwara State, Ahmad Pategi, was killed. On September 24 of the same year, Isyaku Mohammed, chairman of the then newly-registered United Nigeria People's Party in Kano State, was also murdered.

A common feature of all these cases was that nothing was taken from the victims to indicate a motive of robbery. All the victims also had strong political views or affiliations to justify the tag of political assassination.

## ned peace ns' death

at 8.30 a.m. Omo was told by Williams Personal Assistant, one Frank, that the slain politician was yet to wake for the day.

The driver who had made an earlier call about 7 a.m. now became curious and forced his way to his apartment. In the company of the housemaid, they went in and discovered his lifeless body.

Williams' family members, including his wife were not at home when the incident occurred.

The wife, *The Guardian* learnt, travelled to London last week.

Mr. Afolabi Ogedengbe, a Lagos House of Assembly aspirant and a close confidant of Williams, said he had a meeting with him till 11.30 p.m. on Wednesday.

He said even after his departure, another group of supporters still came in to have chat with the slain politician.