

Star witness in Kogi election petition murdered

IN-YET-ANOTHER dastardly act, Mr. Victor Obafaiye, a star witness in the on going governorship and House of Representatives petitions in Kogi State, involving two Action Congress (AC) candidates, Senator Muhammed Ohiare and Mr. Richard Akanmode, has been killed.

The slain Obafaiye was said to have been lured from his home in Kabba at about 1.00 a.m. yesterday to his untimely death by the yet to be identified killers. He was strangled and his lifeless body dumped in the canal in the Odolu area in Kabba, where it was found by passers-by in the morning. Details of the murder and police statement were still being awaited as at press time.

When *The Guardian* contacted the state Police Public Relations Officer, Ambrose Igbokwe, he said he was yet to be briefed on the incident and promised to call back. It was however learnt that the AC leadership in the state had formally reported the incident to the Police Command in Lokoja.

The AC candidate and petitioner in respect of the disputed election in

*From Ralph Omololu
Agbana, Lokoja*

Kabba/Bunu/Ijumu Federal Constituency, Akanmode, yesterday confirmed the incident to journalists in Lokoja. He said Obafaiye was last seen at the Lokoja High Court premises, venue of the election tribunals last Monday, August 13, 2007, at the resumed hearing of his (Akanmode's) case against Dino Melaye of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

The remains of the deceased, a father of four, in his mid-forties, has since been deposited in the mortuary.

In his reaction, the lead counsel to Akanmode, Mr U.M. Enwere, described Obafaiye as a "star witness", whose death would create a temporary set back for his case.

However, the state Chairman of the AC, Chief Mike Adeleye, told *The Guardian* on the telephone that the pointer to Obafaiye's murder "is very clear". He added: "It is a continuation of the violence, intimidation and harrassment meted out to members of the opposition and indeed, supporters of AC, during the last elec-

Continued on Page 2

Continued from Page 1

tions. This killing is part of the game plan to erase all traces of facts in the petitions filed by AC can-

didates in respect of the governorship and House of Representatives elec-

Star witness killed

tions in Kabba/ Bunu/ Ijumu Federal Constituency."

Adeleye recalled that the killing was coming barely a week after Enwere reported to the tribunal last Monday how hoodlums attacked the team that went to Kabba to inspect Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) materials adding.

"That was after glaring irregularities were unearthed".

The AC chief alleged that Obafaiye was killed for being in possession of documents that would have assisted the tribunal in the resolution of the cases involving the AC in Kabba/Bunu. He therefore, urged both the tribunal and the police to provide cover for witnesses in the cases pending before the tribunal as such fate that befell Obafaiye was capable of scaring other witnesses from testifying thereby subverting justice.

Yesterday's incident also marked a dangerous twist to the controversies and the legal tussles trailing last April's elections in the area. The state House of Assembly Tribunal had a fortnight ago, nullified the election in Kabba/Bunu Constituency won by the PDP candidate, Jethro Funsho Oni, on the ground of proved cases of violence. Consequently, the tribunal granted the prayer of the AC candidate, Fred Ayenale, for a fresh election to be conducted in the constituency.

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