



THE METROSection

Yet another felled...

• Family of victim of yet another fatal police shooting, cries for justice

ON Thursday, Olusegun Openiyi was buried. He was only 34 years old and had just been married for two and a half years to Tolu whose tears seem unending as she gazed at her husband's casket.

There were also tears from their first daughter, Ayorinde, and two-month-old Fola, who, though they may not have understood what the matter was, wept as their heart-broken mother did.

An inconsolable mother and her children as well as hundreds of sympathizers were lamenting yet another victim of police extra-judicial killing in Lagos.

The couple's marriage was a life that held so much promise but had been torn apart by the police, who she reasoned, should be protecting her husband, Olusegun Openiyi, who until his death worked for Celtel Nigeria, one of the nations' leading telecommunications service providers.

Life, she said, would never be the same again for them, a fact that sorely touched many of the sympathizers who had been thronging their residence at No. 73, Olateju Street, Mushin, Lagos.

The late Olusegun had been at his job for four years, which enabled him take care of his family including his father, Mr. Michael Adebola Openiyi, a retired soldier.

But all that came to an end at about 8.00 p.m. on Sunday, August 19, 2007.

Olusegun, *The Guardian* gathered, was on a visit to the University of Lagos area and was returning at about 8.00 p.m. when he was stopped by policemen from Sabo Police Station at the University's gate.

An eyewitness said: "The police stopped the man and he did."

"They seemed to have argued and he drove off. Then a shot rang out and it turned out that the police shot one of the rear tyres."

"The next thing was that the police rushed towards the man who was still inside the white truck and one of them pulled open the door and another shot was fired. That was the shot that killed him," the witness said.

Later, it emerged that the Openiyi was shot at a very close range.

The eyewitness said the police, on realising they had made a grave mistake, rushed him to the Military Hospital, Yaba.

"But it was too late. The efforts of the hospital staff were not enough as he died soon after."

The Divisional Police Officer of the Sabo, Yaba Police Station, Mr. Samuel Olukayo, whose men were implicated in the killing, visited the scene shortly after.

Olusegun's cousin, Mr. Mikhail Adewale, also a staff of Celtel Nigeria told *The Guardian* that Olusegun could have been saved but for the delay by the policemen, who went to get fuel for their vehicle first before taking him to the hospital.

The distraught cousin said: "It was another senseless killing by the police that needs to be thoroughly investigated."

"The usual practice of the police trying to cover up for their colleagues who commit offences such as this, should not come up here because the family is prepared to see that those who killed our son are brought to book."

Olusegun's father also vowed to see that his son's killers are not left unpunished.

He told *The Guardian*: "I want to tell the Nigerian Police that if they refuse to punish the killer of my son, they should be prepared to shoot all the members of my family too."

Openiyi, who was also asking for compensation so as to ameliorate the suffering which the death of his son will cause his immediate and extended families wants the items found with his son released to the family.

"My son had a handset, jewelry and some money on him, when they shot him. But it was only his corpse that was released to me without the items", he added.

Another family member who gave her name simply as Mama Bukky; described late Olusegun as an amiable and quiet fellow, known for his friendliness to all in the Palmgrove area before he relocated to Mushin.

The woman, who said she had followed events since the incident, said the family was ready to explore all available avenues to ensure that justice was done in the case.

Already, the family has made official complaints to the Police on the matter.

In a letter addressed to Lagos State Police Commissioner and copied to Police Performance Office, Abuja, on Tuesday, Adebola Openiyi expressed serious misgivings over the attitude of the police since the fatal shooting of his son.

The letter read in part: "Another worrisome aspect of the incident was that his corpse was deposited at the Hospital Mortuary as an 'unknown person' by the same police after his neighbour, a lawyer, had left the hospital."

He had, through the letter, called on the Office of the Public Defender and the Police Performance Office to assist in looking into the whole issue of police brutality especially "in the case of the brutal murder of Olusegun Openiyi".

A Lagos State government medical certificate of cause of death issued by Dr. S. G. Soyemi of the Lagos State University Teaching hospital, (LASUTH), on August 22, following an autopsy said the primary cause of Olusegun's death as hypovolemic shock while the secondary cause was lacerated kidney due to penetrating gunshot to the chest.



• Openiyi



• The bullet-ridden car

By Bertram Nwannekanma

But the Public Relations Officer of the Lagos State Police Command, Superintendent Olabode Ojajuni told *The Guardian* that the police were investigating the case. According to him, though the circumstances that led to Olusegun's killing were shrouded with mix-ups, the police will not leave any stone unturned till the truth was unveiled.

During preparations for her husband's burial at Ipeju, Ijebu, Ogun State on Thursday, the grieving widow fainted and was carried out from the scene even before the burial at about noon.

Consumed in his reverie when *The Guardian* visited his No. 6, Ige Street, Palmgroove-Shomolu residence, just after his son's burial, Mr. Openiyi said all he was asking for was "justice" over the killing of his son and breadwinner.

He said: "I want the government to look into the issue that the police who should protect him, killed my son who could not hurt a fly."

"I want to know if they are there to protect Nigerian citizens or kill them?"

"There should be proper investigations with proper punishment meted out to the culprits", he said.

According to him, it is worrisome and suggests a cover-



• Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Mohammed Abubakar

up that the culprits have not been transferred from Sabo, Yaba Police Station to Panti, Yaba.

The killing comes barely a month after the police, also shot a 22-year-old technician in similar circumstances, in the Ketu area of the metropolis.