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Tuesday, December 23, 2008

Stabbed to death for football

By Seye Olumide

LONG before the last Eid-el-Kabir Festival, Moshood Odunuga had bought new clothes and shoes as well as other things in readiness to have fun alongside his friends and family members during the period.

An auto-technician, Moshood had told his friends and customers he would rest throughout that Monday and Tuesday, which were declared public holidays by the Federal Government.

They should please not bother to call him for any work.

His neighbours at No. 38, Mokoya Street, Ajegunle, Olodi Apapa, Lagos confirmed that Moshood was really in high spirits and had prepared to celebrate.

Why this festival could have meant anything more special to him, none of them could tell, but obviously his mood and interactions showed that he was expecting to enjoy himself during the festival.

He was a lover of the English Premiership Football League and he hardly missed any of the matches, particularly when it featured top teams such as Manchester United, Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool and others.

Apart from being a lover of the English Premiership League, Moshood was also known to be an easygoing person who was loved by his neighbours due to his jovial disposition.

Many young ladies and women within the area usually referred to him as Oko mi, meaning "my husband."

He was that very much loved.

Another reason many of his neighbours liked him was because Moshood was very kind and always ready to render assistance to those that came his way.

However, Moshood did not live to celebrate the Eid-el-Kabir Festival, as he would have wished among his friends and relatives. Residents of the area could not also celebrate the festival as they planned.

They were mourning his death and crying for justice.

On Saturday, November 29, 2008, Jelili Omidele who resides in Okunowa Street stabbed Moshood.

The stab was at the left side of the chest, very close to the heart and Moshood bled to death.

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While people still mourn the death of Moshood, their worry now is the levity with which the case is being handled. There are insinuations that nothing might happen to the suspect at the end of the day.

Some of them, including the father of the slain young man, Akorede Odunuga, are now asking questions such as: "why the body of Moshood should have been released by authorities of Tolu Police Command for burial without his father's knowledge."

They also wonder at the levity with which the station has been handling a homicide case for the past three weeks without transferring it to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) Panti.

While narrating the circumstances that led to Moshood's death, Odunuga told The Guardian: "On Saturday, November 29, Moshood and the suspect, Jelili, among other youths after watching a Premiership Football match involving Arsenal and another team engaged each other in an argument.

"Jelili operates a barbing salon close to where they watched the match. When people around saw that the argument was becoming hot between them to the extent that Jelili was threatening to kill Moshood, they decided to intervene.

"One of those around, Eno, tried to pull Moshood out of the compound but Jelili blocked their way.

Another of my sons, Kamoru, then came to drag him out to stop the fracas between them but the suspect would not allow him. He kept on raging that he would kill Moshood and die with him. When Jelili saw he could not stop Kamoru from taking his brother Moshood away, he ran into his barbing salon, brought out a small knife and stabbed Moshood on the left side of his chest.

"Moshood fell down and was bleeding while Kamoru ran after Jelili who took to his heels immediately he discovered that my son was on the ground. People around took Moshood and rushed him to Okobaba Sule General Hospital at Awodiora in Ajegunle.

"Fortunately, Kamoru caught Jelili and dragged him to the station where he reported that he had stabbed his brother.

But unfortunately, Moshood died a few minutes after he was rushed to the hospital. When he was certified dead, a death certificate was issued to Azeez, an elder brother to Kamoru and Moshood.

With the death certificate the body was brought to the station that very night at about 9.30p.m. and was laid in the compound. Then, Jelili was already in police custody. All the while nobody informed me about what was happening at Epe where I was staying.

"The following Sunday, my elder brother, Asunmo who resides in Lekki had been informed and he came to the station to get the corpse. It was when they were taking the body to Lekki for burial that a message was sent to me to come to Lekki that my elder brother was very sick. I did not know anything until I got to Lekki and my brother narrated the story to me. I was so confused that I could not say anything. The only excuse given for the quick burial was that they would want the body buried before the festival.

"On Monday, I went to the station and met the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) and made my reservation about the rush to bury my son since it was a murder case and the suspect is in their custody.

"The DPO was shocked and told me that my brother presented

himself as the father of the deceased with explanations that he would want the body buried before the festive period. But when I insisted that I wanted the matter to be charged to court, the DPO gave the condition that in that respect, the body would have to be exhumed for autopsy and other necessary arrangements that would enable them file a case. I told him I would not mind.

"He called one of his officers to look into the matter. The Inspector told me that before the matter could be charged to court I would have to give him some money. I gave him N13,000. We both fixed appointment to meet the following day at 8. 30 a.m. in the station for arrangements to file the suit but the inspector did not come to the station until around 2: 30pm. When we later saw, nothing concrete was achieved because he told me that it was on that Tuesday he learnt that court went on strike".

He continued: "On Sunday, I met the DPO and the Inspector and I restated my stance before them that the case must be charged to court since it was a deliberate act while expressing reservations over the rush to bury my son without an autopsy conducted on the body and my consent.

"I also learnt that when the matter was reported at SCID the way it was handled was faulted and had to be returned to the station for proper filing. All I want is justice. I would not ask for too much but that the matter should go to court and that justice prevails".

However , a source from the station confirmed the incident to The Guardian but refused to make further comments since investigation was ongoing. He said it would not make sense to make any statement.

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