

Oniwaya's Harvest Of Deaths In The Midst Of Sallah

By Sony Neme

MORE than a week after festivities marking the recent Sallah celebration came to a close, residents of Agege area of Lagos, are still being haunted by sad memories of happenings the period witnessed.

Within a period of three days, four lives were lost through the instrumentality of a Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN), high-tension cable. The victims were three-year old Oluwajedalo Ayomide; Sunday Hisuan, 25 and a 37-year-old man simply identified as Mathew.

The death of 25-year-old Samson Akinrinsoye, on Friday, October 18 raised the number of deaths to four. And the only survivor in the unfortunate scenario, a petty trader simply identified as Iya Fathia, of 88 Oniwaya Street, Off Capitol, Agege, Lagos, whose only son is one of the dead, is currently receiving medical attention at an undisclosed hospital in Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State, after she was first attended to at an undisclosed hospital in the Egbeda area of Lagos.

The Guardian was reliably informed that a police officer was also electrocuted at the same spot on October 10, 2012.

However, peeved by the unfortunate incidences, which have continued unabated in the past three years, youths of the area took laws into their hands and chased away PHCN officials who had come to restore power. This was after Akinrinsoye death was recorded on Friday, October 18.

The mob action has, however, thrown the entire neighbourhood into total darkness for about a week now and this was confirmed by The Guardian's visit.

Kayode Ojo, a eye witnesses who spoke to The Guardian during the visit said the sad event, which occurred at the Oniwaya/Capitol junction, in Dopemu area of Agege council area, began on Wednesday, October 16 when at about 7:30pm, a 50mm high-tension cable gave way and landed on the roof of a make-shift boutique at the above mentioned address.

According to Ojo, a petty trader whose shop is a building away from the scene of the horrific event, "while the Sallah celebrations were on, a high-tension wire crashed on top of a containerised boutique and everybody scampered for safety. Iya Fathia, who rushed out barefooted to warn those inside the container not to touch any part of the structure because of the live wire, mistakenly stepped on a metal object and was thrown to the ground. Whilst lying helpless on the ground, her innocent three-year-old son ran to her only to be electrocuted."

The mother of two and Akinrinsoye who were still alive were rushed to the hospital, but three other victims died on the spot. Akinrinsoye was later to give up the ghost.

Akinrinsoye being pronounced dead, was the elixir the youths needed to take the laws into their hands and proceeded to the palace of the Olu of Agege to vent their spleen.

Ekpo James, a boxing coach who resides in same compound with Iya Fathia, (the only survivor), who returned home to

meet the chaos, pleaded with the PHCN and relevant authorities to replace the cable as residents of the area have been living in the dark these past days.

He said "The mob that went after PHCN staff are not residents of this area, so we shouldn't be made to suffer what we know nothing about."

One of the youths who made it to the monarch's palace, and spoke to The Guardian on grounds of anonymity said, "We didn't go there to make trouble. We took Samson's (Akinrinsoye) corpse to Kabiyesi's house so that he would give us a place to bury him at Jafojo. At the end of the day, Oba listened to us and sent Babaoba, (his secretary) and another palace chief with lots of police officers in four Hilux vans to ensure that we didn't pay for the burial ground. Our anger is that the Oba didn't even come to where these people died three days after, and he is supposed to be our father here."

He further accused the monarch of neglecting the victims' relatives even as he failed to visit the scene of the incident three days after it happened despite residing along Apata Street, a walking distance from where his subjects died.

Some of the irate youths are also claiming that the PHCN used 50mm cable for the high-tension cables instead of the recommended 150mm that is capable of sustaining the amount of pressure such cables bears.

However, Chairman of council area, Alhaji Abdulkarim Jubril, has reached out to victims' relatives as well as the survivor where she is receiving medical attention.

Jubril, expressed displeasure that when government warns on the dangers of doing business or erecting residential structures under high-tension electricity cables, people just ignore such warnings and go ahead to breach same stressing that, "people don't respect the laws. When I got to know of the situation, the first thing I did was to alert the security agents to ensure that law and order was not broken down, because that is the primary responsibility of any government."

"After that, I was at the palace to see things for myself, because some boys had capitalised on what was on ground before and went to the monarch's palace. And I ask, what has Kabiyesi got to do with NEPA issues? Our people fail to know what to do. If such a thing happens, the first thing for them to do would have been to inform the government. But nobody did. I was not informed, not even the councilor representing the area was."

"The worst scenario is that the so-called educated ones among them don't know what to do either even after we have used all avenues to educate people to know the procedures to follow in the event of any eventuality in their area."

The council boss denied knowledge of PHCN officials being chased away by youths of his council area condemned the action saying the operatives could decide to keep away from the area for as long as they wish citing threat to their lives.

While absolving his council of complicity in the illegal letting out the plots for the traders to erect the structures, he challenged anybody who claimed to have been

METRONOTES

PAINFUL EXIT (R. I. P)

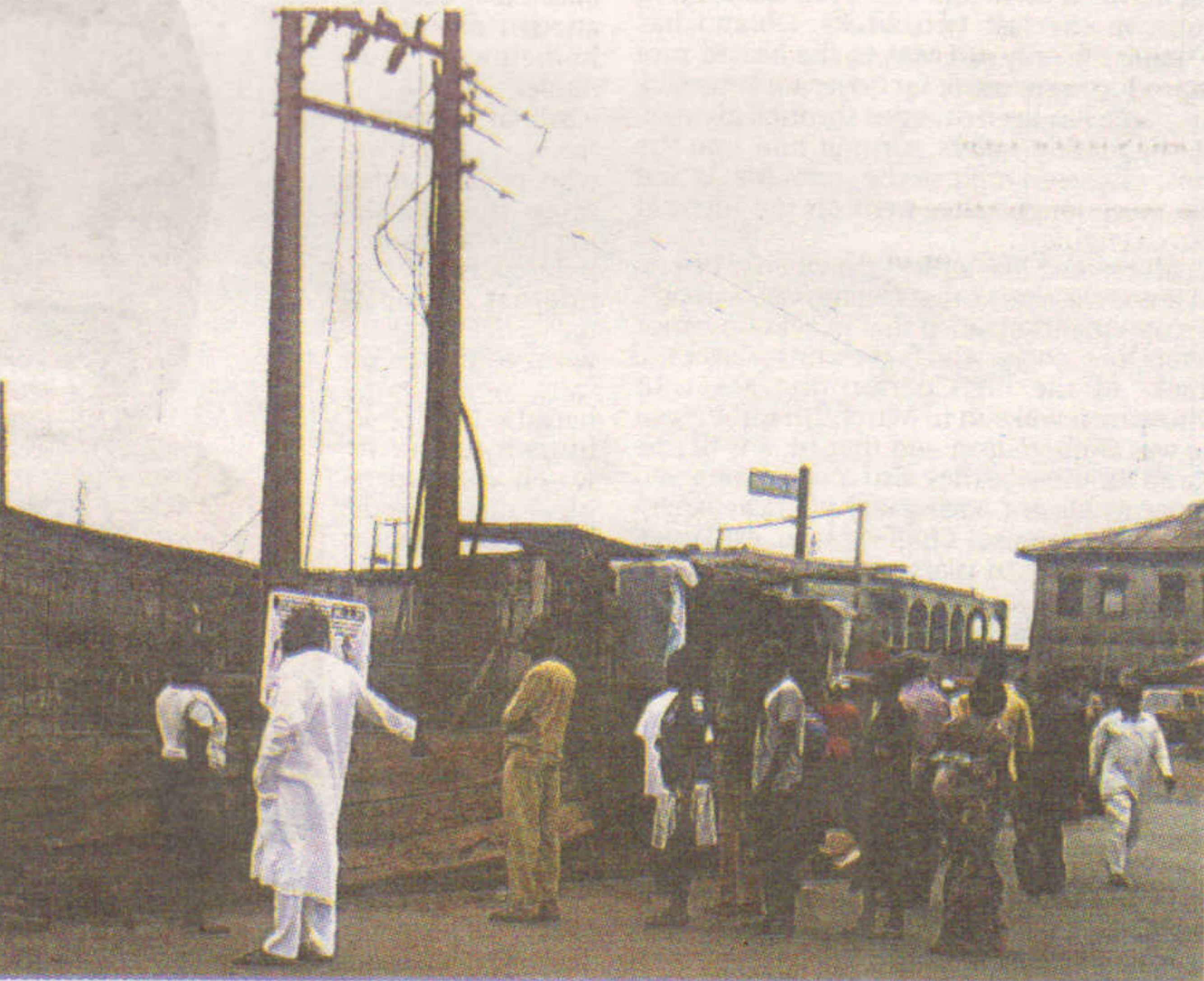
THOSE ARE THE PEOPLE DEAD BY ELECTROCUTED AND THIS IS THE CAUSE OF BAD PLANNING ELECTRICITY IN THE ENVIRONMENT ESPECIALLY ONIWAYA JUNCTION AGEGE LAGOS STATE



Poster of the electrocuted Agege residents



House 88, Oniwaya Rd, off Capitol Agege where the victims were electrocuted.



Concerned residents beside the transformer

issued any official receipt or letter of authority to occupy such places by his council to come forward and prove his/her case.

Efforts to speak to the Olu of Agege, Oba Kamiliu Isiba, on the saga were unsuccessful as his personal assistant, Mr. Saheed

said: "Kabiyesi is not available."

Councilor representing the Oniwaya/Capitol axis in the council, Femi Fawole was not on seat when The Guardian visited on Monday. He also did not take calls to his phone even as he failed to respond to an SMS.