

Family of slain corps member seeks justice months after killing

By Tina Abeku, Abuja

03 January 2022 | 4:12 am



Toju

It was meant to be a normal Sunday morning for the family of Lewis Aboyewa Jackson. There was no premonition that their 23-year-old son, Toritseju Emmanuel Jackson was going to die on September 12, until the news of his murder in front of Toprank hotel in Abuja, filtered in.

Sadly, when the family was called on Monday morning to identify the body, which was abandoned overnight at the crime scene, the hotel had allegedly tampered with evidence by cleaning up the bloodstains, as if nothing happened.

The deceased, fondly called Toju, until his death, was a law graduate from Buckingham University, in the United Kingdom. He returned home as a patriot to complete the mandatory National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) and also attended the Nigerian law school.

For the Jacksons, their hope of getting justice is dimming by the day with the reopening of Toprank hotel for business, in whose front, he was brutally murdered in Wuse Zone 4, Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory, (FCT).

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The victim's father, Mr. Lewis Jackson, told The Guardian that the family is yet to get a definitive feedback from the police since the murder and that all the parties who were with the deceased at the time of the crime have been arrested, released and rearrested. But nothing concrete has been found,

while investigation is said to be ongoing.

He said: “I am waiting to know what transpired, particularly on September 12, 2021, when Toju was attacked and killed right in front of the Toprank hotel in Wuse Zone 4. I expect that by now, the authorities would have been on top of it and like I said, we are waiting, the world is waiting and that is all I can say about that right now.”

Although the family claimed that no suspicious activity was noticed around late Jackson junior before the incident on that Sunday, they said before they got to the murder scene, there was no sign of anything to show that a murder had taken place there because the hotel had cleaned up the blood, and went about their business as if nothing happened, further deepening the grief of the family.

Asked if he was aware of any CCTV footage, capturing the incident since it took place in front of a prominent hotel, Jackson said the only footage that was alleged to be available, was said to have captured only inside of the hotel and was of no relevance to the case.

“Naturally, I think it is a prerequisite for hotels to have CCTV, but as far as I am concerned, the CCTV coverage that they have right now, according to the footage, I’m told shows the inside. The outside of the hotel is very dark, not properly lit, so you can’t see anything from that footage and as far as I am concerned, the hotel has no security.

“There were no policemen on duty, the security man was neither here nor there. He may be like a gateman or something but he’s not a properly trained security personnel, so it is difficult to say truly. The minimum standard that is expected of a hotel of that calibre, is to have proper lighting. So, that guests’ car park is protected in a way and manner that people don’t just stroll in and hurt others.”

In a passionate appeal, the family called on the police to ensure justice is done by unravelling the killers of their son to bring reprieve, serve as deterrence to such acts and build public trust in the authorities.

“It is time to wake up. If incidents like this can happen in Abuja and almost four months now, nothing of substance has been achieved, it causes a lot of concern.

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“This is the Federal Capital Territory, so if you are in front of any hotel, maybe even in front of your compound and you get harassed by anybody and get killed, they will not be able to find out who the killers are. They have not been able to identify the killers, they have not been able to shut down the

premises because they tampered with the crime scene. It is unacceptable as far as I am concerned. Something needs to give and the time is now,” Jackson lamented.

According to him, the most painful aspect of the whole thing is that such could happen in this 21st century and the hotel is still open for business.

“The case was first reported at the Wuse Zone 3 police station and moved later on to the homicide department of the FCT, it is now at the Force Criminal Investigations department, (FCID),” he explained.

The father of the deceased said “Toritseju was picked up by one of his friends, one Sani Saleh. They went out to a couple of places and eventually ended up at the hotel,” he added.

When contacted, the Public Relations Officer of the FCT police command, Josephine Adeh, said the case was earlier under the FCT command and during that time, the command commenced investigation into the matter but that the case has since been transferred to the Force Criminal Investigation Department, (FCID).

CSP Sunday Aremu, of the FCID, who spoke with The Guardian after several unanswered calls, said the FCID Public Relations Officer is yet to give any feedback on the case but that he will let The Guardian know the status of the case once he gets a response.

Months after the police investigations have yielded little as the case is said to be moved from one office to another pending treatment.

Detective Achibong of the FCID, who spoke on behalf of the public relations officer, DSP, Funmi, said his office is yet to be fully briefed on the matter, stressing that the matter recently got to the agency and details would be made available in due course.

The Guardian’s continued visit to the police yielded little results as the murder case is said to be transferred from one office to the other for prompt treatment and as at press time, no update has been given.

Also, attempts to speak with the hotel management was truncated at the entrance as security men barred the reporter from entrance after a brief introduction.

But a resident, whose office is located within the hotel premises, said the hotel is an exclusive branch of Toprank hotels in the FCT, hence there is no signboard or any marking to show that it is a hotel.

Speaking in confidence, the individual said he heard about the murder but thought it was a rumour because there was nothing to show that such happened in that environment.

But the family said they are waiting patiently for authorities to reveal true details of Toritseju’s death and bring the perpetrators to justice.

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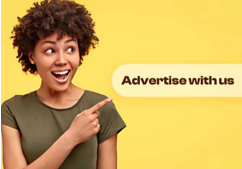
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