



CASE-FILE

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Assistant Inspector-General of Police (AIG) in charge of Zone 2 Command, Onikan, Mr. Israel Ajao, has ordered a probe into the circumstances surrounding the death of Rasaki Taiwo in the cell of men of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), Ikeja, Lagos.

A team of policemen from SARS led by one Shola and Odofin early January this year arrested Taiwo. He was arrested along with Sunday Asiko based on a complaint by one Chief Sunday Ogunyale alias Ajeti.

Ajeti had complained to the police that the two boys were working with a suspected land speculator, who was allegedly trespassing on his land at Iloro, Dopemu, Agege Local Government Area of Lagos.

All efforts by the family members and friends to locate the whereabouts of the two men for nine days proved abortive until January 10, 2007, when Sunday Asiko came back home and informed the family he had been in detention at SARS and that his co-traveller, Shola Udofin, died in police cell as a result of excessive torture and beating.

It was Asiko who told the family that Shola's body had been deposited at the Ikeja General Hospital mortuary and registered as "unknown" person.

The entire drama began sometime in December, last year, when the sleepy town of Iloro, Dopemu, Lagos, witnessed violence of unimaginable proportion, as heavily-armed policemen stormed the place to forcefully eject auto-mechanics and saw-millers, who plied their trade at Olufeso Street in Dopemu.

According to eyewitnesses, the policemen accompanied on the mission by some members of Lagos State Kick Against Indiscipline (KAI) officials, came in two KAI vehicles, wreaking havoc and arresting over 30 people in the village.

One customer identified as Stephen Madu was reportedly shot dead while

Murder In Police Cell

• AIG Orders Probe



• State CID, Pantti, Yaba

many people sustained injuries.

Chairman of the Saw-millers Association, Alhaji Fasasi Mustapha, told *Daily Independent* that though the area had been a scene of crisis in the past, but December's incident was, however, unprecedented.

He revealed that for sometime Chief Sunday Ogunyale had been laying claims to ownership of the 77 acres of land, which also comprises about 15 plots of land occupied by them. Other occupiers of the land included Ahmadiyya Movement (now Anwar-ul-Islam Movement of Nigeria).

Alhaji Mustapha said sometime in 1996, Chief Ogunyale suddenly emerged, laying claim to ownership of the land on which Onipetesi High School, Jubril Martins High School and Oniwaya High School, among others, were built.

Corroborating the assertion of Alhaji Mustapha, Chairman of Mechanic Association in the village, Mr. Olu Akinpelu, told *Daily Independent* that the police operation, which began about 10:30 a.m. lasted till 3 p.m.

"Our people were maimed, injured and arrested. But surprisingly, instead

of taking those arrested to the station, they were released shortly after their arrest," he said.

Meanwhile, in a petition to the Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Sunday Ehindero, over the incident, the Anwar-ul-Islam alleged that Chief Sunday Ogunyale was fond of jumping on various plots of land all over the area and other parts of Lagos with spurious receipts obtained from different families.

The petition signed on behalf of the movement by its National President, Alhaji Katayeyanfue, further said the land in dispute was a subject of litigation at the Court of Appeal, but that Chief Ogunyale had been resorting to self-help on the area.

"Our petition is based on the fact that for over one month now Chief Ogunyale, in the company of 20 other people suspected to be thugs, have been invading the land in question with guns, cutlasses and so on to attack people."

On the present incident that led to the death of Rasaki Taiwo in police cell, Alhaji Adigun Kareem, who was developing a plot of land where the two boys were arrested in January, told *Daily Independent* that when he heard that a group of armed policemen stormed his site and took away the two boys, he organised a search party for them. He first lodged a complaint at nearby Alagbole Police Station.

The search party went as far as SARS at Ikeja, SCID, Pantti, Yaba, and all other police formations to no avail.

"We were in this problem when about 3 a.m. on January 10, a team of armed plain-clothes policemen stormed my house and forcefully broke down my door. Initially, I thought they were armed robbers, but they later introduced themselves as men from SARS, Ikeja.

"I refused to follow them at such ungodly hour, but they used force and took me away. In the morning, I was accused of broking the fence of a building under construction by the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) in charge of Pantti, Mr. Yinka Balogun, at Iloro, Dopemu.

"I denied the allegation. Again, they claimed Sunday Ogunyale alias Ajeti forwarded a petition to them that I was threatening his life. I also denied this.

"About 4.30 p.m. I was bundled before the DCP in Pantti. Unknown to me, my people had organised six top crime reporters to wait for us there and were inside the DCP's office while he interrogated me.

"The DCP denied putting up a building or having interest in any



• The late Rasak Taiwo



• Sunday Asiko

piece of land. He confirmed being a friend to Ajeti and equally denied being in custody of the two missing boys. In fact, he told the family of the boys to hold me very well as it was I who sent them message. Unknown to all of us and the journalists present, one of the boys had died in the police cell that day as a result of excessive torture and beating," Alhaji Kareem said.

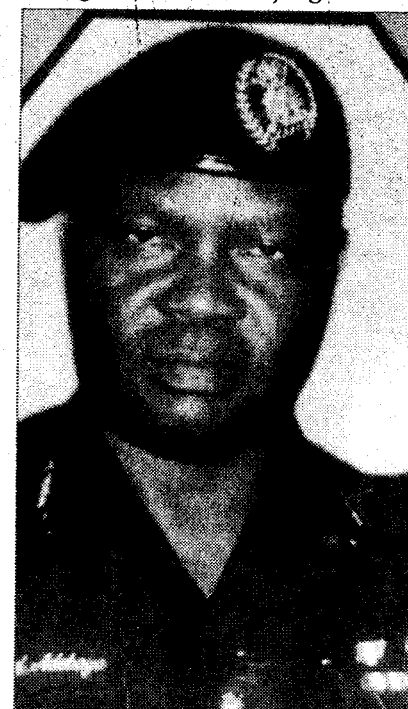
He condemned the police officers who allowed themselves to be used, despite a directive by the Inspector-General of Police that policemen should not dabble into land issues.

Sunday Asiko, who survived the police "brutality" and now recuperating in a Lagos hospital, is still passing out traces of blood in his urine. Doctors said it was as a result of serious assault on his body.

He told *Daily Independent* that he was a casual worker and was on the site working when some armed plain-clothes policemen stormed the place and whisked them away to SARS, Ikeja.



• Olayinka B. Balogun, DCP, Pantti



• Adebayo, Lagos CP

He alleged that at various times, they were hanged upside down and beaten black and blue and on other occasions, their abductors took delight in kicking their scrotum and that it was on one of such exercises that Rasaki Taiwo collapsed.

He said he himself was in a very bad state and their abductors were divided among themselves on whether to allow him to go or "silence" him. At the end of the day, they gave him some money for transport and asked him to go.

Contacted on his mobile phone, Chief Ogunyale confirmed that he was behind the deployment of armed men to the disputed land, insisting he was acting in accordance with a judgment delivered in his favour by a Lagos High Court.

Reminded that the judgment is now a subject of appeal at the Court of Appeal, sitting in Lagos, Chief Ogunyale said that parties in the appeal did not include those he was currently at war with and that he had the right to enforce the judgment.



• Israel Ajao, AIG, Zone 2