



How Police Tortured My Son To Death — *Pa Akinwunmi*

• Abandons Corpse At Police Station

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Tunde Akinwunmi had been in and out of police cell in the last one year. His travail was on account of an allegation made against him by one Mrs. Omolara Ademola. Sometime in November 2007, according to the aged father of Akinwunmi, one Omolara Ademola had reported a case of armed robbery at her factory, located at 879, Samuel Mana Street, Victoria Island, Lagos to the Police in Ajah Police Station.

Adeyemi Adekunle and Daniel Lorkvase were the two security men on duty on the said day. According to the Police the alleged armed robbers currently at large beat up Adeyemi Adekunle to the extent that he started vomiting blood while Daniel and other workers present were tied with ropes.

Following the incidence, Adekunle and Daniel, according to source, were both arrested and detained at Ajah Police Station. The police officer in charge of the case noticed that Adeyemi's state of health was deteriorating rapidly and for fear that he might die, quickly rushed him back to the place of arrest, (the scene of the robbery) at 879, Samuel Mana Street, Victoria Island, Lagos.

According to one of the suspects in an interview with *Daily Independent*, the complainant saw Adeyemi outside, but remained

unperturbed by what she saw. She was quoted as saying that "I will send you and Daniel to prison and you would die in prison." Incidentally, as allegedly predicted by Omolara Ademola, one of the suspects, Babatunde Akinwunmi gave up the ghost while in the custody of the SARS, Adeniji Adele.

The circumstances leading to his death were quite as pathetic as they were with the circumstances leading to his arrest. Babatunde Akinwunmi and four others were charged to Magistrates' Court, Ebutte Metta, for conspiracy and stealing. Their trial witnessed several adjournments at the instance of the prosecution and in particular by the complainant who continually felt that what they deserved was capital punishment, which only a charge of armed robbery could bring about. The source added that on Friday, September 26, 2008, when the case came up again, the charge was withdrawn, and Tunde Akinwunmi and others were rearrested and taken to Federal SARS, Adeniji Adele, Lagos.

On October 12, 2008, late Tunde Akinwunmi's father was at SARS to see his son. He was displeased with his state of health and the attention given to him. He saw his son crawling on the floor, writhing in serious pain, as he could not afford to stand erect. He saw the IPO kicking him and harassing him to stand up, alleging that he was

pretending.

As a father, he felt the agony and prayed the IPO to kindly release his son to him on bail. He undertook to produce him after treatment and introduced himself as a traditional chief, the Bashorun of Ishaga, in Lagos State, to convince the IPO that he being the surety, his son could not run away. At any rate, he pleaded, they had been granted bail on so many occasions in the past and they never for one day avoided showing up at the police station on all appointed days. The old man allegedly reminded the IPO that the pact the family had with Tunde's lawyer, Kunle Fadipe, at the point of facilitating their bail was that they must on no account fail to report at the station whenever they were supposed to do so.

All entreaties made by Tunde's father to the IPO fell on deaf ears. According to Fadipe, "Tunde's father ran to our chambers to impress it on us why we should intervene to ensure the release of Tunde on account of ill health. When we tried to pacify him, he said to us that from what he saw, his son might not last till the following day. There and then we informed the Commissioner of Police in charge of SARS on phone but he also assured us that Tunde was in safe hands." Earlier, one of the lawyers in chambers who went with Tunde's father to SARS office had equally appealed to them at SARS to release Tunde on

bail.

According to one of the suspects in the cell, Tunde's health took a dive for the worse in the middle of the night. The inmates cried for help, but there was nobody to attend to Tunde. By the time help came the following morning, Tunde was in critical condition. He had little life left in him. In other words, Tunde lost his life to the wickedness, brutality and insensitivity of the men of anti-robbery squad, who were insinuated to be acting out the script of the complainant who swore to put the suspects in a situation where they would not come back with their lives.

That was the story of Tunde's father who walked into *Daily Independent* newsroom drenched to announce that Policemen attached to the FEDSARS had taken his "sunshine" away. He added with emphasis that there was no reason why Tunde ought not to have been granted bail in view of the critical nature of his illness and considering the fact that he had enjoyed the same privilege before without abusing it, more so, when the case in question is a bailable offence.

"The act of commission or omission of allowing him to die in Police custody violates the provision of Section 300 of the Criminal Code and exposes the

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•Late Akinwunmi

'How Police Tortured My Son To Death'

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officers in charge, of the station to prosecution for his death," Tunde's lawyer has said. Late Mr. Babatunde Akinwunmi a former employee of an electrical engineering company, Da Bour Nigeria Ltd. of 57, Opebi Road, Ikeja, Lagos, till his death, was married with three children whom he left behind. The story of Tunde's acquaintance with his accuser Omolara also sounded strange.

The father said he was engaged by the complainant (Omolara) to install electrical fittings in the factory. It was at the company Omolara told him that she needed security guards for her factory. Babatunde advised that it was better to engage policemen; a suggestion the complainant dismissed on the ground that policemen could "hardly be trusted." She rather opted to hire members of the Oodua People Congress (OPC) and elicited the support of late Babatunde Akinwunmi. This is what has turned out to be the greatest undoing of Babatunde in that he introduced one Jelili Sanni, who in turn introduced Adeyemi Adekunle to the complainant, as security operatives in the factory.

Adeyemi Adekunle had barely served in this capacity for six months before the robbery incident took place. By reason of the beating he received, Adeyemi's state of health took a dive for the worse as a result of which he had to seek medical attention at home.

The complainant thereafter called late Babatunde Akinwunmi to repair certain electrical appliance in the factory but ended up calling the police to arrest him. Jelili Sanni was also arrested at 3,

Adesina Compound, Iju Ishaga, Lagos, on the same day.

Although the police also invited Adeyemi Adekunle at a time he was still in the hospital, he managed to respond to police invitation. The IPO in charge of the case at Panty could not take the risk of holding him in his custody. He told him to go back for his medical treatment since he was still vomiting blood. Others were not so lucky as they were detained and only released on bail after nine days of detention at Panty. They were asked to be reporting from time to time, an instruction they adhered to strictly.

On one of the visits to Panty, precisely on January 17, 2008, all the suspects were taken to SARS at State HQ by the IPO,

one Mr. Friday, whom according to him was doing so based on instructions because the complainant had sought a transfer of the case to SARS at the state command Headquarters, Ikeja. At SARS, another round of incarceration began ostensibly to please the complainant. They were released on bail on January 19, 2008, after spending two weeks.

It is instructive to note that for all the period they spent in the police custody, nothing incriminating was found or said concerning them other than the evidence of the complainant. They were charged to court for armed robbery and after a second thought, the charge was substituted with burglary as investigation proved

otherwise.

It is worthy of note that Mr. Jelili Sanni and Babatunde Akinwunmi were released on Friday, January 21, 2008, and they reported at the station from their respective homes on Monday January 21, 2008, being the very day they were charged to court. They knew they were going to be charged on that day because the IPO already told them so. In fact the late Tunde Akinwunmi was outside Lagos on official assignment when he received the call to report at the station. He immediately reported without giving any excuse.

The then Commissioner of Police, according to the source, Malam M.D. Abubakar, personally looked at the file and became convinced that there was no

way the accused persons ought to be charged with robbery. He was of the opinion that even if they had committed any offence at all, it would be burglary or stealing since there was no evidence of an armed attack on anybody.

They were returned to SARS that day where they ran errand for the police to buy pure water, cigarette etc. outside the premises of the command. "As a matter of fact, Jelili Sanni saw us to the gate when we visited the suspects at SARS. What kind of SARS would allow robbery suspects so much freedom where they were convinced in the least that Tunde and other suspects were armed robbers?" Tunde's father queried.

He maintained that he went

this far to buttress his argument that none of those who preferred a charge of armed robbery against these people in the first instance had the slightest belief in the charge, which they preferred, stressing that it was just that they lacked the

courage to do that which was right or to be guided by the ethics of the profession, which demands of every police officer strict truthfulness in his handling of investigation and in giving of evidence" in accordance with section 339 of the Police Act.

It was therefore not surprising that the charge

was withdrawn on a deeper consideration and substituted with stealing, which was the charge Babatunde Akinwunmi faced until his demise in the hands of FEDSARS, Adeniji Adele, Lagos. Even though they were charged before the Chief Magistrate Court, Ebute Metta, and were subsequently granted bail, they never for one day failed to show up in court. At no time did they give reasons to abstain from court.

"On what basis therefore did Mr. Keffas Godzama refuse to release Tunde, considering the antecedent of the case and the conduct of the suspects, knowing full well that death was staring him in the face. This is why we find it difficult to dispute the allegation by Tunde's relatives that SARS officials, particularly the team investigating the case against Tunde deliberately yielded to the pressure of the complainant to terminate Tunde's life. There are witnesses to the oft-repeated statement of the complainant that she would not be done with Tunde and other suspects until there is no more life remaining in them.

"I have decided to come to you (*Daily Independent*) because I know I would get someone to listen and give me and my family justice. That is my prayer, Justice. I want the Police to produce my son alive. I have abandoned my son's corpse to the Police and would not collect it until his killers are brought to book."

He added, "I do not know what my son has stolen from this woman and the Police who killed him has not also told me what he stole or what his sins were to deserve death penalty."



•Mrs. Akinwunmi and children