

Senior Correspondent,  
**AJIBOLA ABAYOMI**,  
writes on the fall-  
out of political crisis  
between factions of  
Peoples Democratic  
Party (PDP) in Ogun  
State recently

**THE PEACE** of the people of Owode-Egba in Obafemi Owode Local Government Area, Ogun State, was defied on August 7 this year when suspected assassins went on rampage in the town killing three members of PDP as a fall-out of break in the rank of factions within the party.

*Sunday Independent* gathered that a community relations programme by Senator Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello for that day at Owode was hurriedly put off following a tip-off of a move by PDP factions in the area to disrupt the event.

The spate of political killings in the state got messier early in the year when cry of sorrow rented every nook and cranny of the state over the murder of a leading politician and the governorship candidate of Action Congress (AC) in 2007 general election, *Otunba* Dipo Dina, by unknown gunmen.

Police are yet to unravel the cause of his death, but many Nigerians have every reason to believe that the slain politician may have joined the list of unresolved murder cases in the country. The development is not peculiar to Ogun alone, but political killings have never been the hallmark of the reputable state that has produced prominent personalities that have distinguished themselves in all walks of life like the late sage, Chief Obafemi Awolowo; Chief Bisi Onabanjo, ex-President Olusegun Obasanjo, Chief Olusegun Osoba, Senator Ibikunle Amosun and the incumbent governor, *Otunba* Ggenga Daniel; to mention a few.

Repeatedly, Nigerians have urged politicians in the country to steer clear of politics of elimination. History has proved that often, apart from the political gladiators involved in political brouhaha, villages, towns or cities where such occurrences reign supreme never recover from it on time.

Not only will lives be lost, but in many instances, youths are cut down in their prime. Akure, the capital of Ondo State, today is yet to recover from the political clash that took the city by storm in 1983 when the struggle for political supremacy broke out between the then governor, Sir Michael Adekunle Ajasin of Awolowo's Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and James Omoboriowo of National Party of Nigeria (NPN), now a pastor.

Apart from the fact that some of the warring factions that played a leading role in the volatile crisis are yet to resolve their differences, prominent Akure indigenes like Chiefs Agbayewa and Akogun, the Fagbamigbes and the Iges are still nursing their wounds at their place of birth, as scars of the incident that left many dead are still there for all eyes to see.

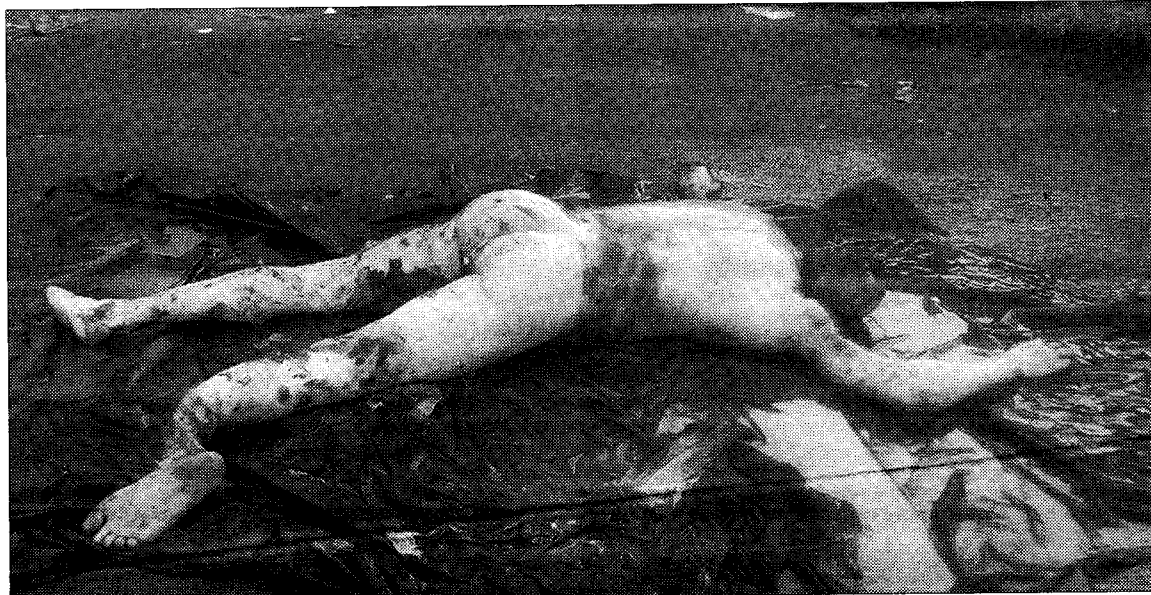
Some of vandalised property are yet to be renovated to the dismay of many.

Uneasy calm has continued to pervade Owode, as there are fears of reprisal from PDP faction called "federal" comprising land speculators allegedly funded by the state government for political activities in the local government, following the discovery of stolen corpses of the party's members murdered on August 7.

The Ogun State Police Command has confirmed that some of the suspects in connection with the crisis have been arrested, but was quiet on whether the matter has political undertone.

Recently, an Abeokuta High Court restrained the National Working Committee (NWC) of PDP and national chairman of the party, Okwesilieze

## When Ogun politicians turned Owode-Egba to battlefield



•Kehinde Gafaru



•Taye and Kehinde

Nwodo, from dissolving the Ogun State PDP executive committee.

The three dead persons have been identified. They are: Muri Salami, Kehinde Gafaru and Taye Gafaru, while Mrs. Abibat Salami and her three sons - Doyin, Quadri and Gafaru - shot at in the town on August 8 are in coma at unknown hospital.

In a desperate attempt to sweep the matter under the carpet, corpses of the deceased were said to have been stolen from a hospital in the town and dumped in a pit along Odo-Eran, Owode, on Wednesday, August 12.

The development, *Sunday Independent* learnt, led to the vandalism of a building belonging to one of the PDP chieftains, Alfa Rashidi Onilenla, alleged to have armed the PDP youth faction that carried out the mayhem.

While some top government officials have tried to play down the incident, linking it to dispute among Owode land speculators without stating the import of the crisis, Onilenla and key PDP chieftains in the town have since fled the town.

The Divisional Police Officer (DPO), Owode, Gbolahan Adigun, said the matter has been transferred to the state headquarters, and the Ogun State Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Muyiwa Adejobi, said some suspects in connection with the crisis have been arrested.

"We have made some arrests. You are asking when we are going to the court. We are taking our time to get

all the evidence intact because we cannot just approach the court without convincing evidences.

"We are on it. Many of those that perpetrated the crime have fled the town. We will get them. Certainly, they will be apprehended. It was a clear case of murder and arson. We will carry out thorough investigation. Please be assured that the police will get to the root of the matter."

Speaking at the family house of the Garafus, at 28 Surulere Quarters, Owode, the head of the family, Mr Sakiru Sanya-Olu, and the elder sister of the deceased brothers, Mrs. Bola Shitta, confirmed that Kehinde Gafaru (35), the ex-convict, was a member of the PDP caucus.

Sanya-Olu said: "Since Kehinde returned from the prison last year, he vowed not to have anything to do with "federal" group in PDP, mainly because he believed some big men in Ogun State were the ones behind his predicament, until Saturday August 7 when he was shot dead around 10.30 p.m. When we heard the news, Taye, 32, his younger brother, rushed to the scene of the event. We were surprised few minutes later that the assassins opened bullets on him too.

"Before Taye gave up the ghost at a hospital here, he mentioned known faces in Owode who are members of the "federal" group like Lobi, Idowu Elediyi, Alabi one, Alabi two, Olowode Mutiu and Scorpion as those who fired bullet at him and his

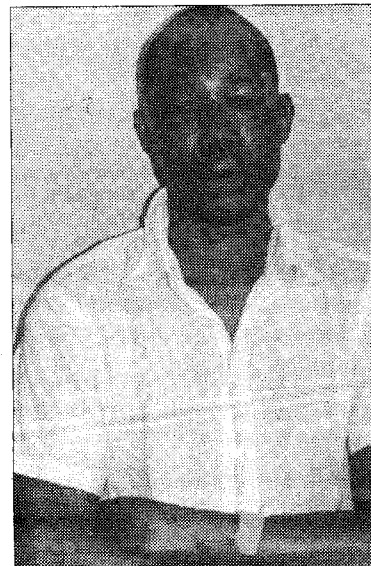
brother. The assassins forcefully took them from the hospital only for us to find their dead bodies and the third person that was killed at a pit along Odo-Eran five days later."

Alani Kabiru, the younger brother of the murdered Muri Salami, also told *Sunday Independent* at Owode that "the body of my brother was stolen at Olabintan Hospital, School Road, Owode, on Saturday and dumped at a pit along Odo-Eran on Wednesday. I was at the hospital in company of policemen from Owode Police Station but they behaved as if nothing happened."

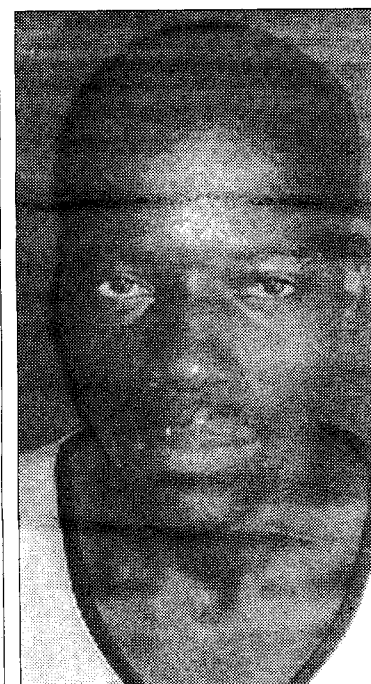
"We were short of words that people could go to that extent to settle political scores. My brother was a member of PDP. Simply because he declined to join forces with those backing the state government and the chairman of Obafemi Owode Local Government, he was maimed."

"Since the incident happened, my mother, Abibat Salami, who still has bullet on her neck, and my three younger brothers, Doyin Salami, Gafaru Salami and Quadri Salami, also shot at the following day they killed my brother, are still bed-ridden in pains as a result of bullets sunk into their bodies."

In a telephone interview, the media aide of Senator Obasanjo-Bello, Mr Bidemi Osunbiyi, said: "Owode, for now, is a volatile area. That was why we have to cancel our programme there. We are not involved in the crisis.



•Kehinde



•Taye

We are not in any way connected with any crisis."

The Chief Press Secretary (CPS) to Ogun State governor, Adegbenro Adegbenro, claimed ignorant of the development, when contacted to clarify the governor's relationship with the PDP factions in the town. He, however, exonerated the state government from the crisis saying: "We don't want to start joining issues with people who like to play up sentiment in the media."

"This is a political season and a lot of people may like to cook all sorts of things to discredit others. We need to be careful. The media must not allow itself to be used by politicians who want to score cheap political point. We will get back to you after our investigation."

In as much as politics should be made open to every interested and willing Nigerian, the nature of youths recruited by the Ogun PDP in Owode is an eyesore.

In a decent community like Owode, why can't the party meaningfully engage youths that are cautious of their future rather than putting their hope on the stipend from political financiers?

If, indeed, the crisis was not politically-motivated, why did major political figures in PDP in the town flee? It is cause for concern. One can only hope that as Ogun State Police spokesman promised that police will get to the root of the matter, masquerades hiding under political garment would be unveiled and made to face the consequences of their action.