

# 52-year-old bakery owner dies in hospital after his spinal cord, ribs and skull were allegedly broken by policemen



•Late Quadri on hospital bed

**T**HE atmosphere at 39, Andrew Kalu Crescent, Baruwa, Ipaja, Lagos State was charged on Tuesday. It was as if a contest was in progress to determine who would shed the most tears among bereaved widows and family members. Invectives poured from sympathisers and family members rained curses on errant policemen who allegedly beat their 52-year-old breadwinner, Mr. Ismail Quadri, to death.

For hours, Mariam, the eldest widow of the deceased, tried unsuccessfully to narrate the circumstances that led to the tragic death of her husband. And when she eventually mustered sufficient courage to explain how her husband allegedly met his untimely death in the hands of policemen from the Ipaja Police Station, the conversation was intermittently punctuated with tears.

According to the 42-year-old widow of Quadri, a native of Igbemo-Ekiti, Ekiti State, the event that culminated in Quadri's death on Monday occurred around 8 pm on September 8, 2011 as the deceased prepared for the production of the loaves of bread he would supply to his agents the

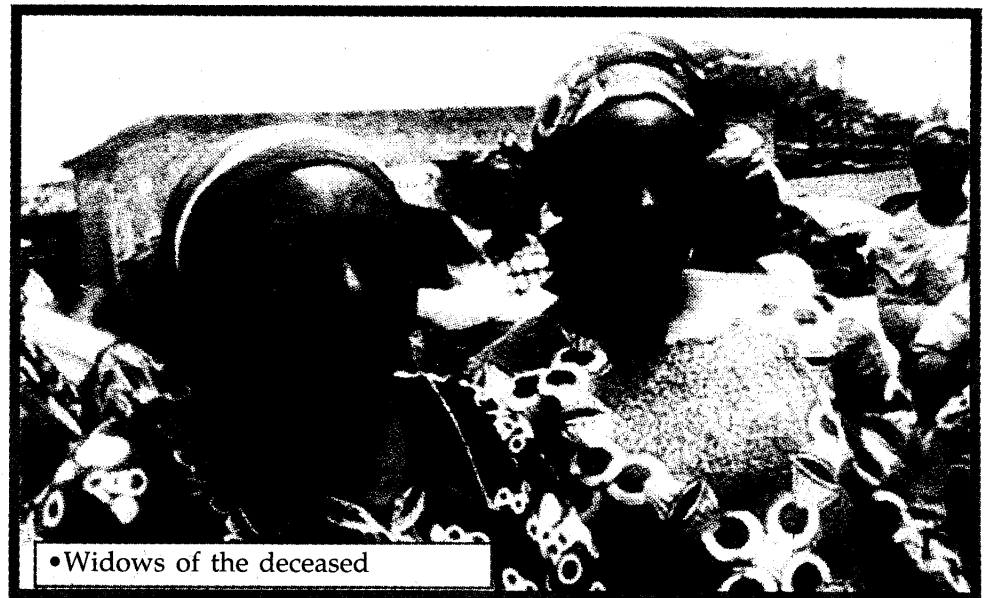
■ Kunle AKINRINADE ■

following morning. He was said to have given his workers a break to have their dinner in the hope that by the time they returned, the production proper would begin around 10 pm.

Trouble, however, began when some men from the Ipaja Police Station, led by two police officers identified simply as Mayor and Waheed, allegedly stormed the area in a commercial vehicle to arrest some residents in front of their houses. The policemen then went for the deceased who lay on a couch inside the bakery, a stone's throw from his 29, Andrew Kalu Crescent residence, and beat him mercilessly before they dragged him into their van.

She said: "Although policemen from Ipaja Police Station had been harassing innocent residents in the neighborhood for some time now, the officer called Mayor, who masterminded my husband's death, proved the most notorious of them."

"On September 8, 2011, my husband had told me that he would be on night duty with his workers in order to produce enough bread to meet up



•Widows of the deceased

with the demand made for the next day. I never knew that those brutal fellows they call policemen would turn me into a widow.

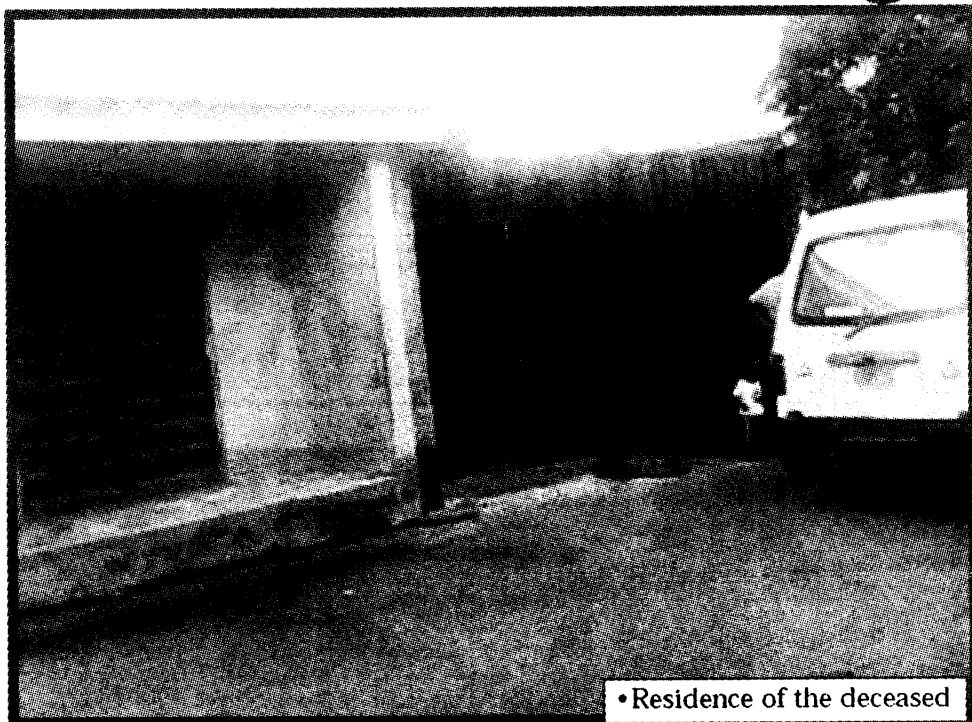
"At about 8.30 pm, there was a pandemonium in the neighbourhood. When I asked what was happening, they said some policemen had stormed my husband's bakery and were about taking him away. I rushed to the scene

only to find Mayor beating my husband and kicking him on the floor.

"All the pleas I and other residents made fell on Mayor and Waheed's deaf ears. He even threatened to deal with anyone who pleaded on behalf of my husband. The policemen dragged my husband alongside two other innocent residents who were taking fresh air in front of their homes



•Children of the deceased



•Residence of the deceased

and pushed him into their vehicle."

The 52-year-old deceased was then taken to the police station where he was allegedly tortured for no just cause. In the process, he fell into a coma. He was rushed to the hospital but he died 11 days later.

"He told us on his death bed that when he got to the police station, he was subjected to another round of beating with his hands tied to a stationary motorcycle parked within the station's premises.

"He said by the time his hands were let loose from the motorbike, he could not stand up again. The situation forced the policemen around to take him to about three different hospitals but they all rejected him on the grounds that his spinal cord had been damaged.

"He was later admitted at a private hospital from where he was transferred to the Lagos State Teaching Hospital (LASUTH) where doctors again confirmed that his spinal cord as well as his ribs and skull had been damaged.

"He told us that the notorious police officer called Mayor hit him many times at the station and that there was an instance Mayor kicked him mercilessly for daring to ask him for the reason behind his arrest and he crumbled on the floor.

"Initially, the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) of the station said he knew nothing about my husband's arrest by his men. But he has since recanted, saying it was a mistake.

"But he is still reluctant to apprehend the said policeman who cruelly beat my husband to death without any offence. The police claimed there was a warrant signed for his arrest, but they could not provide it when we confronted them.

"Now, those policemen, who are supposed to protect innocent citizens have killed my husband. Who will take care of his seven children and dependants? He has an aged father and siblings in his care."

The deceased was said to be based in Sagamu, Ogun State before he relocation to Lagos some years ago because of the tribal crisis between the indigenes and Hausa settlers which rocked the Ogun community in 1999.

He then built a house and established Olusola Bakery which had been doing well since then. Neighbours described as a peaceful, unassuming man.

Funmi, the youngest wife of the deceased, could not hold back tears while lamenting the tragic loss of her husband.

She said: "I have two children for him and the youngest of his children, Quayum, is one and a half years old.

How do I explain to his children when they grow up that heartless policemen killed their father for nothing sake?

"This kind of tragic killing by those who ordinarily should protect the lives of citizens portends huge danger for our country and should be discouraged if truly we want to build a society that everyone can be proud of."

An eyewitness, who asked not to be named, explained that the policemen had become a pain in the neck for the residents.

She said: "At about 8.35 pm on that day, was at home that day attending to my children inside my shop when people started running helter-skelter. I later saw some policemen led by an officer called Mayor arresting some neighbours in front of their homes. Moments later, they went into the bakery to arrest the deceased and they were dragging him into their vehicle.

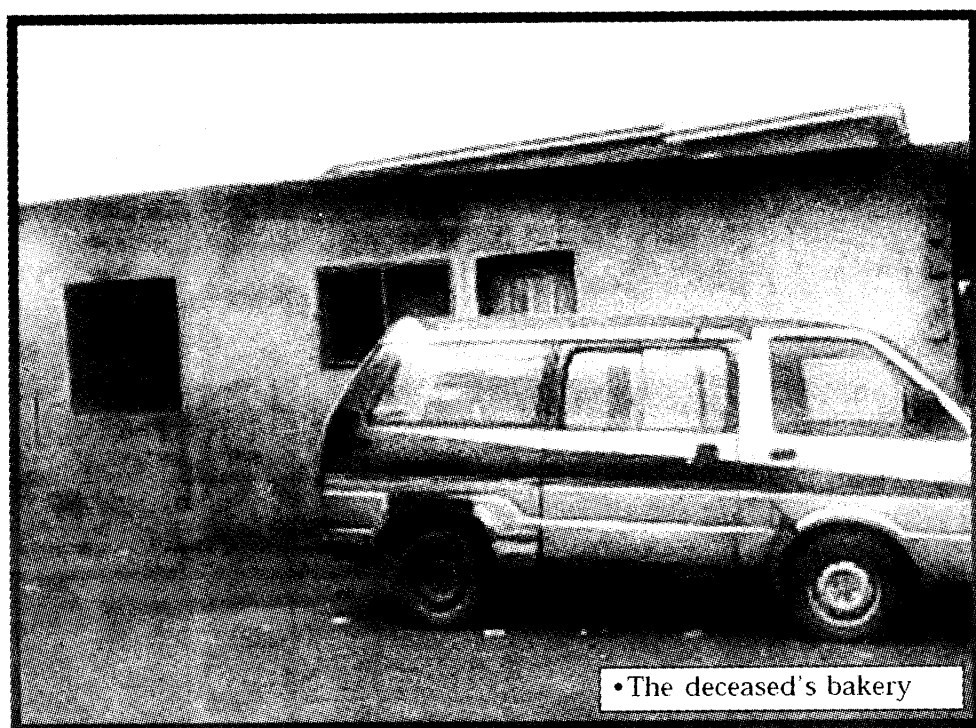
"The situation attracted neighbours who quickly alerted influential residents who even offered to give the policemen money for the release of the deceased, but their pleas were turned down by Mayor.

"He was beating the deceased and kicking him with his boot as if he was beating a child. By the time he visited at the station to secure his release, he had been badly beaten to the extent that they had to rush him to some private hospital which declined to admit him on the excuse that his spinal cord and skull had been damaged.

"He was subsequently transferred to LASUTH where he later died.

"But while at the hospital, the same police officer who beat and tortured him even brought a herbalist to check on his health but the deceased's family members turned him back."

Another resident, who pleaded anonymity, berated the police for their



•The deceased's bakery

incessant raid on innocent residents without justification.

"It is disgusting that officers of the law are the one breaking it. Or how do you explain a situation where policemen would turn law abiding residents into cash cows by constantly embarking on raids that cannot be justified?

"Each time they stormed this area, their victims would be made to cough out huge sums of money to secure their freedom.

"Ever since they killed the gentle bakery owner and the hoopla it has generated, they have stopped coming because they have realised that people are poised for a showdown with them. The Lagos State Commissioner of Police (IGP) must, as matter of fact,

caution his men to stop harassing harmless residents so that we can have sanity in the society."

At LASUTH, the police officers from Ipaja Division who went there to secure the release of the remains of the deceased from the mortuary were turned back for what officials described as the absence of Magistrate signature on the inquest note. Angry family members who had besieged the hospital were fuming over what they described as the perfunctory attitude of the police over the matter.

The angry relations of the deceased then moved to the Ipaja Police Station to demand from the Divisional Police Officer (DPO), Mr. Chikezie Okezie, a Chief Superintendent of Police (CSP), the reason for the delay, but he was said to be away on patrol. Other policemen on duty, however, pleaded with the family members of the deceased to exercise patience, adding that the matter would be sorted out.

The eldest child of the deceased, Tajudeen, according to findings, has just secured admission to study Economics at the Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti. He was in Ado Ekiti to formalise his admission when the news of his father's death was broken to him. He was said to have fainted immediately he learnt of his father's death.

The Public Relations Officer of the Lagos State Police Command, Mr. Samuel Jinadu, a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) was yet to fulfill his pledge to comment on the matter at press time.

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