

Family, school row over 23-year- old allegedly tortured to death by fellow students

• Why we have not
visited deceased's
family — Rector

• The late Adeola

A reverend gentleman, Rev. Balogun Arogunyo Adekunle was looking forward to the day his 23-year-old son would graduate from the polytechnic, but his dream was cut short with the death of his promising child in controversial circumstances.

The grieving father was still deeply in mourning mood when our correspondent visited on Sunday and he poured out his heart. He had just returned from the Sunday service and was decked in an all-white. While many would expect him to show obvious signs of being dispirited, he chose to accept the death of his first son, Adeola Peter Balogun, a 23-year-old ND 2 student of Osun State Polytechnic, Iree, with equanimity. Adeola was allegedly murdered by cadets of the polytechnic.

According to the clergyman, Adeola, who was allegedly beaten to death on May 19, 2012, was neither a cult member nor a violent child. "He was a gentle, obedient and promising child for that matter. He was my first son. He was my lover; somebody I had thought would be an asset to this country. But now, he is dead," Balogun lamented.

If he was sad because of his son's death, the authorities of Osun State Polytechnic had also made him angry. Explaining the genesis of the incident that culminated in his son's death, he said: "I was not there when the incident occurred, but I understand that some people called Vanguard Cadet apprehended one boy, a new student in the school."

He said the arrest of the ND 1 student later resulted in the death of his son because the ND 1 student in question identified Adeola as a member of a cult group, following which he was arrested and allegedly tortured to death. The clergyman insisted that there was no way his son would have been a cult member because he had been sternly warned from home to

■ Gbenga ADERANTI ■

shun anything that had to do with violence and bad company.

The clergyman is particularly angry that the authorities of the polytechnic had not deemed it fit to commiserate with his family. "The school's authorities have not approached me. The day I learnt about this case, somebody assisted me in getting across to the Public Relations Officer of the polytechnic, but the man said he was not aware of the incident, saying that we should call back. He later called back and said I should go to Iragbiji Police Station," he said.

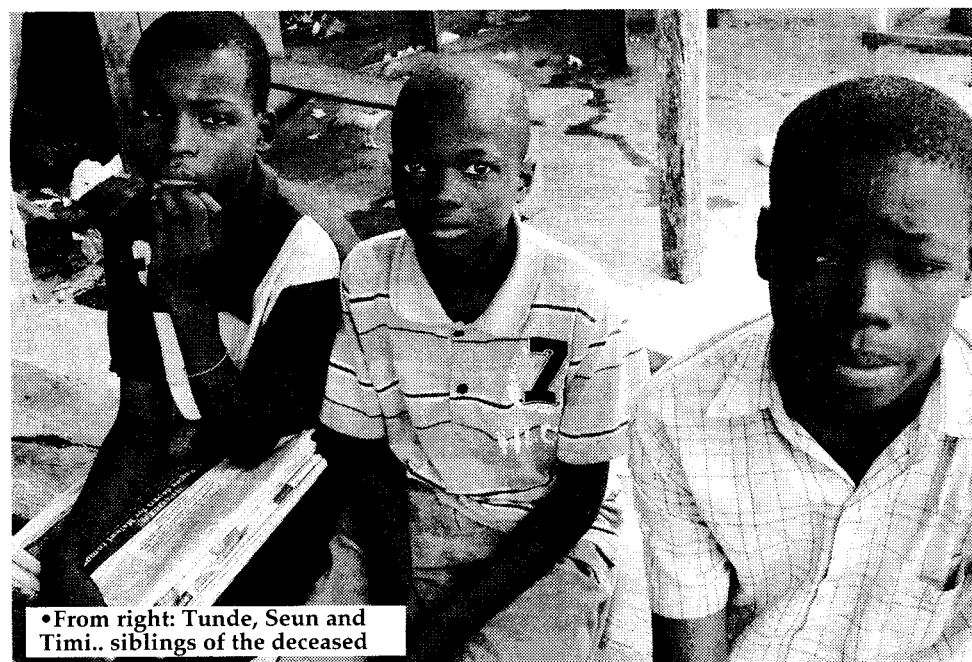
After looking everywhere for the body of his son without any success, he was left with no choice but to approach the Rector of the school, who advised him to approach the State CID in Osogbo, saying he had heard that something happened to a student in the school. "Along the line, somebody called me from Iragbiji while I was trying to board a bus to Osogbo and advised me to go and check the State Hospital mortuary at Ikirun," he said.

His journey to Ikirun was futile as nobody could help him to locate the body of the deceased student. He again headed for Osogbo, hoping that the news of his son's death would turn out to be a mere rumour since the body was not found where it ought to be. His hope was, however, short-lived as he got another call asking him to check the morgue of Ladoke Akintola University of

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•The entrance to the polytechnic



•From right: Tunde, Seun and Timi.. siblings of the deceased

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Technology (LAUTECH).

He went to the state CID, because he needed to go with the police to the hospital. It was at the CID office that the reality of the incident dawned on him. "The policeman asked me who I was and I told him that I was Rev. Balogun. He said, 'Okay, the father of the deceased? That was when it dawned on me that the story I had heard was true; my son was truly dead.'"

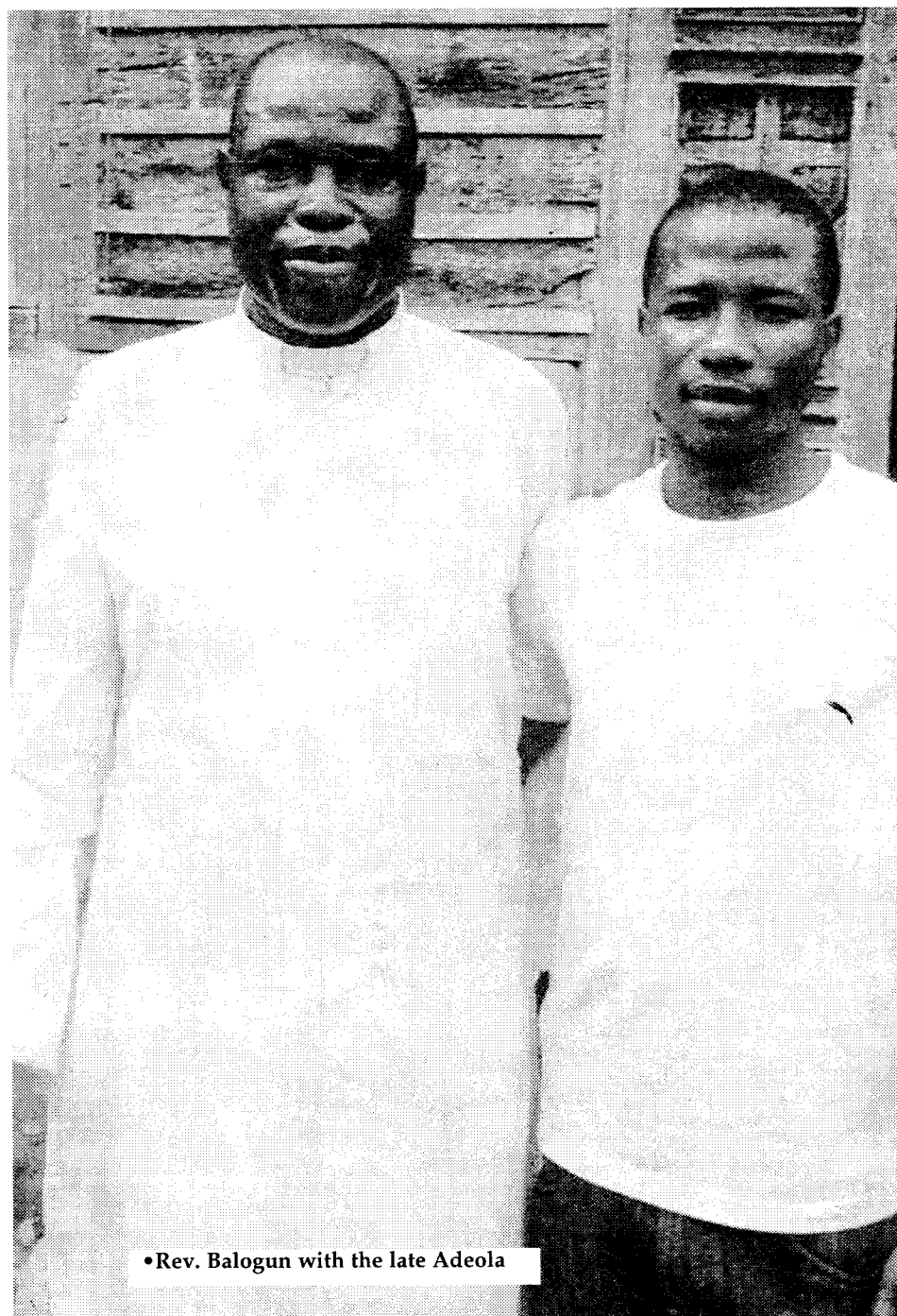
He said if the authorities of the school had taken the necessary precaution, the death of his son would have been averted. "I heard that the cadet was proscribed. I think that was medicine after death. I believe that it was the negligence of the school's authorities that

caused the problem. I was told that cadets were registered in school and had a cell where they used to detain people.

"The power of arrest by a private individual is only possible if the person arrested is handed over to the police within a reasonable time. But a situation where you subject somebody suspected to have committed a crime to what you call trial by ordeal, you know it is uncalled for," Balogun fumed.

He is not happy that he has not heard anything from the authorities of the school. "None of the members of the school's authorities has deemed it fit to call me to discuss with me or console me."

The body of the deceased was still at the LAUTECH mortuary at press time.



•Rev. Balogun with the late Adeola

The Rector of the polytechnic, Dr. Jacob Agboola, said there was no cell in the school as was being claimed in certain quarters.

"We couldn't have been insensitive. First and foremost, we are parents. Forget about whatever might have happened. We have our own children. Some of them have passed out from higher institutions; some of them are still there. We have to put ourselves in the position of the parents. Nobody will pray for that to happen.

"Apart from the fact that we are parents, we are the custodians of these children. We have to take adequate care of the security and protection of these children. That is our primary objective for being there, whether as a Rector or whatever you are," he said.

Describing the death of the ND 2 student as a "sad development," he explained that the school was not in session when the unfortunate incident occurred. According to him, those who participated in the incident did that on their own accord. "If you are in the school cadet or paramilitary, you have a code of conduct approved by the institution. And ordinarily, one would expect members of the paramilitary group to be people that are very sensitive, and are able to provide security for the lives and property of the people in that area."

He said he did not expect students to still be around since they were supposed to have gone on break. "Anybody who stayed behind must have had an ulterior motive for staying behind," the Rector said.

Not minding the fact that the school was on vacation, the Rector said it was the school that invited the police.

On the allegation that the school was slow in responding to the incident, Agboola insisted that the school couldn't have done anything to the contrary because it had to determine whether the people involved in the whole incident were actually students. "We could not determine whether they were students or not until we got the police report. It was then we went into our records to know

whether they were students or not," he argued.

He said the first reaction of the authorities to students involved in cult activities is to place such students on suspension until the case is determined and he is expelled or rusticated. "That was what we did to the paramilitary boys. They were first placed on suspension. The police took up the matter because it was a criminal case."

He explained that the school didn't want to be involved in the matter because "those who perpetrated the act were not representing the institution. They did that on their own. How could we have come in? If we come in, in favour of who?"

He denied ever giving the paramilitary body any power to assault anybody, not to talk of taking lives. He also said the authorities of the polytechnic had hesitated in visiting the parents of the deceased because they were waiting for the police to conclude their investigations. "If we had visited the parent and it was later discovered that the deceased was a cult member, are we encouraging cult members in this institution? Let the police do their investigations."

He said the outcome of police investigations would determine the next step the authorities of the school would take.

Agboola said: "It is not as if the management is insensitive. It is an issue that does not concern the management of the institution because of the circumstances surrounding the whole episode. If an individual has gone ahead to take the law into his hand, how would the school come in?" he asked.

The Rector also disclosed that the activities of the para-military group had been suspended long before the death of Adeola. "Their activities had been annulled," he told *The Nation*.