

CRIME

Family seeks answers after 22-yr-old student allegedly drowned

• He was buried in the presence of his relations – School authority



• The late Sylvester

THE family of a National Diploma (ND) engineering student of The Polytechnic, Imesi Ile, Osun State, Sylvester Oluwatosin Okoruiele, who allegedly drowned in a river, is demanding explanation on the circumstances surrounding his death.

The late student was said to have left the school to play football with some of his classmates near a river close to the private polytechnic on May 3, 2014.

The *Nation* gathered that the deceased had initially trained as an aluminum technician before securing admission into the school. He was said to have resumed fully for lectures in January before his tragic death a few weeks ago.

The bereaved family, however, disagreed with the account of his death given by top officials of the school. "I am still struggling to come to terms with his death. Imagine sending your son to school and the next minute, you are being told he died in a river near his school, while on the contrary, the said river was tucked in a forest about seven miles away from the school," said Sylvester's heartbroken father, Chief Moses Okoruiele.

The Ibadan-based 63-year-old retired civil servant, who hails from Uromi, Edo State, recalled how he received the news of his son's death.

"I received a call from the Registrar of the college on May 3, 2014 asking me to see the Rector of the school the next day. I asked him to tell me the reason for the invitation but he declined. Because I am a Catholic, I asked him to reveal the reason for my invitation to a reverend father in charge of a Catholic parish near the school who will in turn relay the information to the priest in charge of a catholic church where I worship in Ibadan. That was how the news of the death of my son was broken to me."

He accused the school authority of being adamant despite the insistence of the family to know those it claimed went with his son to play football near the river.

"I quickly dispatched two of my sons and other relatives to visit the school in

order to determine the veracity of the story and I was shocked at the outcome of their findings. First, I was shocked when the dele-

■ Kunle AKINRINADE ■

gation told me on phone that the school had concluded arrangements with some community leaders at the palace of a traditional ruler to bury my son near the river where he allegedly died without our knowledge. Second, the members of the delegation were led through a thick forest which was about seven miles away from the school to the river where my son was said to have died. This was contrary to the explanation given by the school authorities that he died in a river within a short distance from the college.

"There was a hot argument between the delegation and the community leaders, who had insisted on burying my son near the river in line with their traditional belief, which my relatives turned down. I asked the leader of the delegation on phone to play cool in order not to endanger their lives since they claimed that they were outnumbered by the locals. The family had requested the release of Sylvester's body for proper burial in line with the tenets of Christianity but my son was buried near the river against my wish and demand for autopsy to determine the actual cause of his death.

With a tearful plea, he said: "I want justice and nothing but justice. There are many questions that require answer. The claim by officials of the school that my son went to the riverside to play football with three of his classmates cannot hold because four people cannot play good football together. Another suspicion is that the school had rejected my request to see the three students who allegedly played football with my son. Each time I demanded to see them, officials of the school always gave excuses as to why I cannot see them or know their identity.

"The Divisional Police Officer (DPO) of Obokun Police Division where the case was reported even told me he cannot say much about the case because he had just been transferred to the station, adding that he had since forwarded the details of the case to the state police headquarters in Osogbo. I have visited the Osun State Police Command at Osogbo, where a senior police officer, who attended to me, requested for the case file in my presence and assured that investigation would be carried out on the case but as I speak I have not received any information from the police. Even the Investigating Police Officer (IPO) in charge of the case has stopped picking my calls.

One of his relatives, Mr. Steve Egbodoh, said: "We found it diffi-

cult to believe the circumstances surrounding Sylvester's death narrated by the officials of the school. To this ends we are calling on the police not to sweep the case under the carpet because of the nature of his death and his controversial burial by some community leaders in conjunction with the school without seeking the consent of his family."

When contacted on his phone line on Tuesday, the Registrar of the school, who refused to reveal his names, said: "I am not in the best position to speak on this matter. I would link you up tomorrow (Wednesday) with the Rector of the school, Prof. Benjamin Oluwafemi, who will give you his comment on this case."

He, however, forwarded the telephone number of the chairman of the school's Governing Council to the reporter, saying: "I have been instructed by the Rector to ask you to speak with the Chairman of the Governing Council of the school, Barr. Emmanuel Abiodun, on the case you mentioned."

Commenting on the matter, Barr. Abiodun said: "I am aware of the case you mentioned. The children involved are adults and they live off campus. There was an ongoing examination at the time the unfortunate incident happened. Nobody expected that the students would choose to play football near a river while the exam was on. Sylvester was said to have died while he was trying to save one of his mates from drowning."

He denied the school's complicity in the burial of the remains of Sylvester near the river. He said: "Eight members of the bereaved family were around before he was buried near the river. Who would have stopped them from collecting his body for burial if they had requested for its release to the family? Besides, the students involved have made their statements to the police on the circumstances surrounding his death."

"Following the unfortunate incident, we have warned our students to always inform the school management before embarking on any sensitive trip. The school has not been indifferent to his studentship since he came to study in the school. The boy (Sylvester) was once sick and was taken by officials of the school to a nearby hospital where he was treated while his family was duly informed."

Responding via a text message, the spokesperson for the Osun State Police Command, Mrs. Folasade Odoro, a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), said: "The case is under investigation."

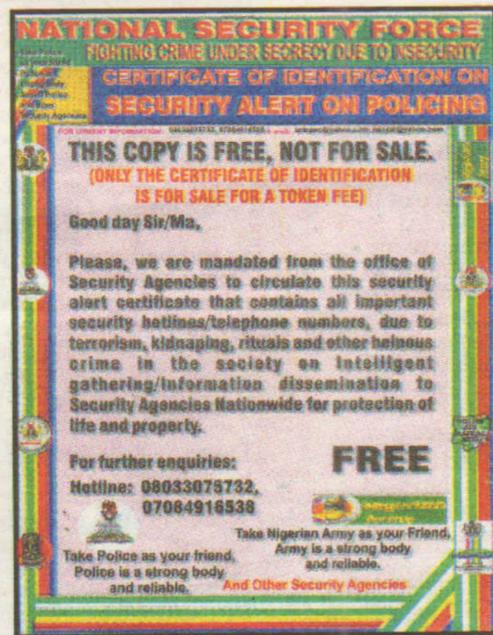
Strange security outfit extorts Lagos

AN amorphous security outfit called 'National Security Force' has allegedly been extorting money from shop and business owners in Abule Egba area of Lagos State. Members of the group allegedly stormed the area about 4pm on Tuesday in an unmarked Volkswagen Vanagon bus demanding the sum of N1, 200 for registration.

One of the traders, Ms Janet Ibikunle, who spoke with our correspondent, said: "Although, I did not give them any money because I suspected they were fake but some of my colleagues fell for their tricks and regretted paying the money."

"They wore black beret on mufti but had on their dress a short apron with 'policing' inscribed on it. They circulated handbills which have the logo of the Nigeria Army, Police Force, and National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) among others, thereby creating fears in the mind of the traders. Their location or address was not displayed on the handbill.

A copy of the handbill obtained by our reporter reads: "National Security Force: fighting crime under secrecy due to insecurity. Certificate of identification on security alert on policing. This copy is free, not for



■ Kunle AKINRINADE ■

sale; only the certificate of identification is for sale for a token fee... please we are mandated from the office of the security agencies to circulate this security alert certificate that contains all important security

hotlines/telephism, kidnaping heinous crime (gent (sic) gather nation to security protection of life enquiries...080

Another trade herself as Mrs. fell victim to the outfit because played on their "I thought th of their appear were not genui woman alerted gone. I gave th said we could closed office."

When our rep phone number to identify him call, said: "Plea Police Station, the description the sensitive na The spokespe Command, Ms so-called Natio gal organisation existence."

FOR READERS' ATTENTION
Do you have a crime/scandal story for us? Please, call 08167164657, 08023910970 or 08063099434