



Police seek info on robbery victim 'denied' emergency treatment

• Hospital refutes allegation

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Precious Igbonwelundu

The death of a woman in Lagos on Tuesday after armed robbers stabbed her in the neck has generated passions and questions. Moradeun Balogun, a podcast host, was returning home on Monday evening when she was reportedly attacked by the hoodlums, *The Nation* gathered.

Some good Samaritans rushed the bleeding woman to R. Jolad Hospital in Gbagada area of the city but the hospital allegedly declined to give her emergency treatment without police report.

It is a criminal offence for a medical facility or health worker to turn down a gunshot victim or someone in emergency situation for any reason, including failure to provide police clearance. A contravention of this law is punishable by up to N500,000 fine or a six-month jail term, or both.

Many have died because they were turned back by hospitals insisting on police report.

The death inflamed passions. Many thought the Gbagada hospital had contravened the law and should be shut down, with its owner and officials on duty prosecuted.

Ms Balogun's friend, Emmanuel Olabode, who shared the information on social media, wrote: "Nigeria is designed to kill you. Lost a friend who was robbed and stabbed this morning but was denied treatment unless a police report was provided. R. Jolad Hospital, are you happy now?"

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Many social media users seized the opportunity to narrate how they lost loved ones in similar circumstances. One Harri Obi said that was how his younger brother died in 2016, wondering why police report was still a criterion in 2019.

"This was exactly how my younger brother lost his life in 2016. Three years later and we're still on this 'Police Report' matter."

Another user @mcmuchacha wondered why the hospital would insist on paper when an emergency was before it. "Someone is taking her last breath inside your...hospital and you're there requesting for police report?"

Seun Olagunju said: "How is Moradeun dead? You were such a good person! Rest in Peace. I am so sad and my hands are shaking."

Did R. Jolad Hospital decline to treat Ms Balogun because there was no police report? If it did, there is no evidence, yet.

The hospital said the woman was assessed by two doctors and immediately referred her to General Hospital Gbagada for vascular surgery.

The hospital's report sent to our correspondent said: "At R-Jolad Hospital, our primary purpose has always been to save lives each time we encounter both difficult and less difficult situations. We do this for all sorts of cases and all sorts of people including gunshot victims without requesting for any police report as a requirement to be met before attending to the case.

"The most recent example was about a patient that was rushed to our facility on emergency on December 2.

"In the first place, the patient (Balogun) was not a victim of gunshot. It was a stab wound.

"The patient was brought in by four good Samaritans around 07:19pm and was attended to by two doctors whose assessment indicated that the patient needed immediate attention of a vascular surgeon.

"The patient was therefore referred to the closest hospital, Gbagada General Hospital in one of the available vehicles at the spot since the ambulance was yet to return from a medical assignment. The vehicle departed exactly 07:26pm. Further findings and follow-up revealed that the patient was received in Gbagada General Hospital.

"We remain true and committed to our core values which place premium and value on human lives."

The Lagos State Police Command has urged the deceased's family to come forward with necessary information and evidence that would aid investigation.

Spokesman Bala Elkana told *The Nation* that police report was not a requirement to treat victims of gunshot or any injury at all.

He said: "There must not be police clearance at the time an injured person is brought to a hospital. Their duty is to receive and save lives first and then report to police within two hours.

"The IG has consistently warned that on no account should any hospital reject a victim for lack of police report. A public statement was issued in this regard. Hospitals have a duty to accept emergency cases and treat them.

"We encourage the deceased's family to come forward with details of what happened in this case. We are advising hospitals to be guided by the laws of the land and ensure that their primary duty is to save lives. Saving lives come first before law enforcement because the person has to be alive to answer for his or her charges."



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