



# Furore over father of five allegedly shot dead by customs men

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• The late Kehinde Ogunji

**The killing of a young farmer, Kehinde Ogunji, by customs men on the trail of smugglers in the Yewa North Area of Ogun State penultimate Saturday has sparked a row as family members, residents and monarch of the town urged the police to bring the officers fingered in the killing to justice, reports **KUNLE AKINRINADE****

- ***He was a smuggler who attacked our men — Customs***
- ***Father, monarch: our son was not a smuggler, we want justice***
- ***We're investigating incident — Police***

Only justice can stop the tears of the family members <sup>close</sup> to a 25-year-old father of five, Kehinde Ogunji, who was allegedly killed by some customs men in Agbon village in Yewa North Local Government Area, Ogun State penultimate Saturday.

Since the young farmer was shot dead by operatives of the Ogun Area Command 1 of Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) who were pursuing some rice smugglers, life has not been the same with his bereaved 65-year-old father, Elder Emmanuel Ogunji, and his twin brother, who accused the Customs authorities of trying to cover their complicity in the killing of Kehinde.

According to Elder Ogunji, his son was returning home on a motorcycle with his twin brother, Taiwo, after a communal work at a farm belonging to one of their kinsmen, Sanusi Akindele, when the minions of law opened fire on them, killing Kehinde who operated the motorbike on the spot, while the real smugglers they were trailing escaped.

To cover up their indiscretions, the customs men numbering six, according to Elder Ogunji, moved his son's motorbike to a cliff near a river and covered his body with leaves.

He said: "I had just returned from an aro (communal farming) when Taiwo rushed in to tell me that some customs men opened fire on him and Kehinde while they were returning from a farm owned by one Sanusi Akindele, where they had participated in communal farming exercise.

"I immediately asked him to lead me to the scene and I met the customs men there. The officers lied to me that some of their colleagues had used Kehinde's motorbike to pursue some smugglers and that they were waiting for their return.

"I became curious when they could not clearly explain my son's whereabouts. It was at that point that I decided to search the area only to find my son's body covered with leaves and his motorbike parked near a river."

Shocked by the discovery, Elder Ogunji said he raised the alarm and accused the customs men of deliberately killing his son and making attempts to cover up their complicity in his killing.

“When I raised the alarm and confronted the customs men, they could not say anything. I decided to report the matter at the Eggua Police Division from where I was directed to Oja Odan Division which has the jurisdiction to incident the case.

“By the time we returned to the scene, the customs officers had called for a reinforcement and forcibly took my son’s body away.

“The two customs men that pulled the trigger have confessed in their statement at Oja Odan Police Station that they actually opened fire on my son, Keh close he two officers were asked to report back to the station today (Monday) but we did not see them when we got to the station.

“My son is not a smuggler. He was a farmer and a father of five children and husband of two wives. I suspect that the two customs men are trying to avoid prosecution, but I want to sound this loud and clear that nothing but justice can wipe my tears and calm me down on this matter.

“I am calling on both the police and the Ogun State Government to wade into this matter by bringing the errant customs men to justice.”

Speaking with The Nation, the deceased’s twin brother, Taiwo, who witnessed the gruesome killing of Kehinde, described the conduct of the customs officers as callous.

He said the officers had no reason to shoot at them in the first place because they were not smugglers.

Taiwo said: “We left home around 6 am on that fateful day on empty stomachs but we took some garri with us. After working for some time on the farm, we took the garri in the hope that we would eat real meal when we returned home.

“We finished clearing the farm at about 1 pm and we left on Kehinde’s motorcycle. I was seated behind him while he operated the motorbike.

“It was just a few metres to our village when we started hearing gunshots and my twin brother (Kehinde) was hit by bullets fired by customs men.

“The customs men did not bother to look at Kehinde who was in a pool of his blood. I had to race home to inform our father about the incident.

“By the time I returned to the scene with my father, the customs men, in a bid to cover up their indiscretions, had pushed Kehinde’s motorbike to the bank of a river and covered his body with leaves.

“Sensing that we could make trouble with them, they called for reinforcement and their colleagues arrived to forcibly take Kehinde’s body to a morgue. “All we want is justice, because Kehinde and I are the breadwinners of our family. He is survived by two wives and five children.

“We have since informed our monarch, the Iselu of Iseluland, Oba Ebenezer Akintunde Akinyemi, about the incident, and he is disturbed by the dastardly act of the customs men.”

In his own explanation, Akindele said the twin brothers close rely left his farm when news reached him that some customs men had killed one of them.

He said: “Kehinde is not a smuggler. The customs men are just trying to use that to cover up their wicked act, having killed him shortly after he left my farm where he and his twin brother, Taiwo, had worked for me free of charge in line with the custom of communal farming called aro.”



• Late Kehinde's twin brother and Kehinde's father, Elder Emmanuel Ogunji

### **Deceased was a member of smuggling gang — Customs**

But the Ogun 1 Customs Command, in a statement released by its spokesman, Abdullahi Maiwada, described the deceased Kehinde as a member of a smuggling gang who attacked its officers in their bid to intercept smuggled bags of foreign rice into the country.

Maiwada noted that the incident occurred at about 1pm while officers of the command were on routine anti-smuggling patrol in Iselu and Egua areas of Yewa North Local Government Area.

The statement reads: “At about 1pm on Saturday April 25, 2020, officers and men of Ogun 1 Command of Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) went on routine anti-smuggling patrol eventually

came across a convoy of motorcycles popularly known as okada ferrying smuggled foreign parboiled rice along the bush paths of Iselu and Igua communities, Yewa North Local Government Area of Ogun State.

“The aforementioned smuggling gang, having been caught red handed, resorted to unleashing a vicious attack on officers performing their duties with assorted dangerous weapons.

“The officers successfully repelled the attack launched by the smugglers, and at the end, one of the smugglers died and his corpse has since been deposited in the mortuary.”

It added: “Furthermore, the arrival of reinforcement teams enabled the evacuation of 44 bags of rice (50kg each) and two motorcycles abandoned by the close smugglers to Government Warehouse in Abeokuta for safe keeping and further investigation.

“It is instructive to note that Saturday April 25, 2020 was a date set aside for total lockdown in Ogun State due to the surge of COVID-19 pandemic. However, the daredevil smugglers who have no regards for the law of the land or the disease ravaging the global community resorted to crossing the border through illegal routes to perpetrate their nefarious activities, in total disregard of the health and economic well-being of the country.

“Finally, the Command wishes to reiterate and warn the public against attack on officers performing their lawful duty as such will leave the officers with no other alternative than to defend themselves.”

### **Killing the innocent, leaving the real culprit?**

Checks made by the reporter however revealed that the customs men might have missed their target and fatally silenced an innocent person in the course of hunting rice smugglers in the axis. Highly placed sources revealed that one Sunday who resides somewhere in Eggua was the leader of the rice smuggling ring who escaped the guard mounted by the customs men while Kehinde, who was returning from his farm, was killed.

The said Sunday, sources said, had been on the radar of the customs command lately but had always beaten customs men each time they tried to intercept him.

One of the sources, who spoke in confidence, said: “They only killed the wrong person. The late Kehinde was never a smuggler.

“The culprit is known to the customs command and they have always missed him each time they try to apprehend him.



•Oba Akinyemi

“The customs command is just being economical with the truth by claiming to have intercepted about 40 bags from Sunday.

“The truth is that the gang dropped off the bags of rice to block the road and stop customs men from chasing them further while they escaped with a lot of bags of rice.

“Sunday, who lives around Eggua community, has not been arrested while innocent persons who are going about their <sup>close</sup> daily endeavours are being killed unjustly.”

In his own reaction, the Iselu of Iseluland, Oba Ebenezer Akinyemi, described the killing of Kehinde as reckless and an act of murder by customs men.

He wondered why an unarmed farmer who was not found with any contraband was gruesomely killed while the real culprits escaped the grip of the law enforcement agents. son.

“For me, the police must do their job by bringing the unfeeling customs men to justice in the interest of deference to the sanctity of rule of law which is the basis of their existence and operations.

“I have spoken with the police and they have promised that justice will be done on the matter.”

Contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer of the state command, Mr Abimbola Oyeyemi, said the people responsible for Kehinde’s death would face justice at the completion of investigation.

Oyeyemi added that the case had been transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) at the state police command, Eleweran , Abeokuta, on the orders of the Commissioner of Police, CP Kennedy Enrimson.

“We are investigating the matter with a view to ensuring that justice is served.

“The case was initially handled by the Oja Odan Division, but CP Kenneth Ebrimson has ordered that the case be transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID), Eleweran, Abeokuta, for further investigation.

“The bereaved family can rest assured that whoever is responsible for the killing will not go scot free.

“The customs is a sister agency and the request for officers involved is not a difficult thing to do.”

The controversial killing of Kehinde is coming barely three weeks after a 15-year-old schoolgirl, Sekinat Agbelade, was allegedly shot dead by men of customs men in Agosasa, Ipokia Local Area of the state.

The girl, a Senior Secondary School 3 student of Agosasa Community High School, was preparing for her West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) before her untimely death.

close

The customs officers were said to be chasing some suspected rice smugglers when they fired the bullets that killed the girl as she was returning home from an errand.

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