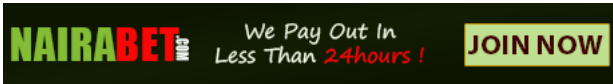


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March 26, 2016

Written by: Oluwatoyin Malik



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As one approached Ile Odekun in Saki town, Oyo State, the residence of Mr Alimi Akeem a.k.a. Sakilayewa, who was shot to death by a trigger-happy policeman on Wednesday, March 9, 2016, it was noticeable that the people gathered in front of the house were mourning, with the sombre looks they wore.

As if in consonance with the people's mood, the entire Araromi area where the house was situated bore the silence almost that of a graveyard. A stranger to the house would not have made a mistake to think that talking would seem rude and irresponsible. The silence wore on.

But as this writer stepped into the parlour where family members, the deceased's children and sympathisers surrounded the first wife of the deceased, Mrs Nimota Akeem, she had no choice than to break the silence as she commiserated with the family on Akeem's death.

It was obvious that the shock of the sudden exit of Akeem, who was a driver before his gruesome killing, had yet to wear off. It will be recalled that Akeem was shot in the head by one Inspector Oyibo popularly called Yellow along Saki-Okerete over N100 extortion.

Yellow was attached to border patrol as at the time of the incident which occurred and was said to be the only policeman posted to the Orita Sanni checkpoint.

It was learnt that the victim, who plied Saki to Okerete community was on his way back to Saki when he passed through Yellow's checkpoint. Though Akeem reportedly dropped N100 for a young man called 'Camp boy', who was employed by the policeman to be his 'toll' collector whenever he was not at the point of duty, Yellow slung his rifle across his chest and pursued the deceased, using his motorcycle, when he was

told by his 'Camp boy' that Akeem did not pay his toll.

As Yellow caught up with Akeem about two kilometers from the checkpoint, he shot at one of his car's tyres, forcing him to a stop. Akeem's protest against the policeman's action silenced him forever as the cop shot at him through his vehicle, with the bullet penetrating the side of his left eye, tearing through his skull to exit through the back of his head, along with a chunk of flesh and brain matters.

Speaking with Saturday Tribune on the sudden exit of her husband, Mrs Akeem, said that she had no premonition that her husband would die that day.

"When he was leaving for work, he asked me to take his son who was ill to the hospital. The nurses told me to leave the child in the hospital for observation so I went back home to wait for my husband, expecting him to return to give me money to pay the hospital bill. I had no inkling of the fate that had befallen my husband.

"As a food vendor, I attended to customers in the morning. I later went inside our house. Unknown to me, neighbours had heard about what happened but they were avoiding me. If they saw anyone approaching me, they would quickly block the person. At about 3p.m., my mother came and told me to pack my food containers. I asked her why and she replied that my husband has been shot dead and it was as if he could not be saved.

(Burst into tears) "I shouted, asking people to please come to my rescue. As I was running about, I even hit my foot against a heavy stone and my nail was forcefully pulled out. I was not allowed to go anywhere until four days after when his body was brought home for burial. Who will take care of me, the children and other members of the household now our breadwinner has been killed?"

The wife said her husband had a good relationship with the police, wondering why he was killed like a fowl. According to Mrs Akeem, "my husband would buy bags of sachet water and give two bags to policemen at each checkpoint he passed through.

"The reason he gave for this was that the areas where the policemen were stationed had no potable water. He would also buy loaves of bread and distribute them among the policemen. He was the breadwinner of his nuclear and extended family."

The deceased's uncle, Alhaji Jubril Azeez, who also spoke with Saturday Tribune, said that his nephew's death has left a vacuum in the family.

"Akeem had been helping me in taking care of the family; now everything has been left for me to do.

"Since his vehicle was brought back to the family, I have not been able to bear the feeling that he was killed because of N100. The government should please save us and ensure that justice is done through the prosecution of the policeman, with adequate compensation to the family."

Also, the chairman of Oke Opin unit of the RTEAN, Alhaji Moshood Iman, said: "The policemen along the routes to the suburbs where our drivers ply had constituted problem to us. They have too many checkpoints which were mainly to extort us. It is untrue that we were conveying smuggled goods. You would even see from the vehicle the deceased drove that day that he was carrying three bags of yam flour."

The deceased's stepmother, Mrs Ansetu Alimi, who also broke down in tears as she spoke, said "Akeem was the one feeding me and my children since his father died six years ago. The policeman has caused the family a deep sorrow. He has destroyed me because two of my children are finishing schooling this year and I don't know I will go about things. Yellow has rendered me naked."

In his own words, the RTEAN chairman in Saki, Alhaji Imran Ekuntakoro, described the killing of Akeem as unfortunate. "Such a thing a thing had never happened around us. We have told the Divisional Police Officer in Saki that we want only responsible people to be posted to checkpoints. We have told the Commander of Border Patrol who came from Abuja the same thing because if this should happen again, it would cause serious clash between us and the police.

"The Bagi of Saki who is our father in Saki has spoken to us and we are keeping calm for now. We learnt that the IG has instructed that the culprit should be fished out by the Commander. Our union will make a case out of the incident because someone paid to protect us cannot kill one of us and he will just go like that."

Reliable sources told Saturday Tribune that Yellow was posted to the checkpoint not too long ago. Before then, he was alleged of killing two people in Ago Amodu, though the police authority was said to have taken his action was a mistake. In the story, armed robbers attacked commuters and asked them to lie on the ground. When the police were informed, Inspector Oyibo reportedly came to the scene and, on sighting the victims who stood up after their attackers had left, fired at them, killing two of them instantly. His claim was that he thought they were the robbers.

Saturday Tribune gathered that after the latest incident, the killer cop escaped to a neighbouring country after dropping his gun with his colleagues, and was said to have called some of them less than 24 hours after, with a number showing the code of a neighbouring country.

Aside Orita Sanni which had only Inspector Oyibo at the checkpoint, other checkpoints with just a policeman include Wasangari along Ilesabaruba road (a sergeant) and Odo border checkpoint (a corporal). Other checkpoints with policemen from border patrol are Imua, Ijio, Komu, Igbeti road Oje Owode/Ago Amodu, Eruwa, Iseyin/Okaka, Ogbooro/Igboho and Agbonle.

Since the incident happened, it was learnt that the policemen in town had been moving with caution while drivers had also stopped the erection of checkpoints at certain places until the resolution of the case of Akeem's murder.

When contacted for an update on the matter, the state Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Adekunle Ajisebutu, stressed that the state police commissioner, Leye Oyebade, would not condone any act of recklessness from any policeman serving in the command or working with other commands but posted within his command.

The PPRO remarked that Oyebade had consistently lectured police personnel on arms handling since he assumed duties in the state command, saying "you will note that whenever such an incident occurs, the Nigeria Police Force has always been taking appropriate action to sanction whoever did a wrong thing.

"CP Oyebade has already directed the State Criminal Investigation Department, Iyaganku to take over the case and investigation. Police will never be in support of such action as carried out by the Inspector. Even we have defaulted him in absentia and there is a manhunt for him.

"We have recovered the rifle the policeman used and whenever he is found, he will have to defend his action. He is on his own. He has violated the rules guiding the use of firearms and the case is going to be treated as such."

On behalf of the police commissioner, Ajisebutu commiserated with the family in the period of mourning, assuring them that fairness and justice would prevail.

