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Family of man allegedly shot by police demands compensation



Late Olaoye

| credits: Family

A look at their faces told you a whole lot. With tears swelling in their eyes, threatening to pop out of their lids, it was obvious the children of Sulaimon Olaoye, a 67-year-old taxi driver allegedly felled by police bullets, were in crushing pains. The shocking demise of their father and breadwinner leaves the entire family in total grief.

According to eyewitnesses, the deceased was killed on August 6, 2014 at Alade Avenue, opposite the Lagos Airport Hotel in the Ikeja area of the city, while returning from the Murtala Mohammed International Airport where he had earlier ferried a passenger to in his taxi. Olaoye was said to have parked in front of the Mobil filling station in front the hotel for a meal at a nearby canteen. But before he stepped in, he quickly bought table water to quench his thirst. It was while he was gulping the water that tragedy struck. Officers of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad had arrived at the area and suddenly started shooting indiscriminately. A bullet hit Olaoye, snuffing life out of him instantly. The SARS operatives had stormed the place following a tip off by the owner of the canteen (a woman simply identified as Mama Chuks) that some suspected armed robbers were eating there.

The news came as a rude shock to the children of the deceased who told *Saturday PUNCH* that their father was not a thief and should not have been killed by the Policemen in that operation. Ahmed, one of the sons of the late Olaoye, narrated what transpired on that day in a chat with our correspondent.

“All the people we met told us that they knew our father. As they tried to rescue him, he

was lumped in the midst of the armed robbers that were shot that night. We learned that some armed robbers had been terrorising the area and had gone to the restaurant to eat.

“They said the armed robbers used to go and eat at that particular canteen because some currency dealers operate within the area and that they had staged series of attacks and escaped. But on that particular night, the robbers were eating at the canteen when the owner called the SARS officers. As they got to the scene, they just started shooting instead of entering the canteen to arrest the armed robbers,” Ahmed said.

The deceased’s other children told *Saturday PUNCH* they are now demanding for full compensation by the Nigeria Police for allegedly killing their breadwinner, in addition to the fact that they could not get access to his corpse for burial until about a week later. This, according to them, was against their Islamic beliefs.

A solicitor for the family, Barrister Abayomi Apata of Owolabi Dawodu & Co. Legal Practitioners, said he had filed a petition to the Lagos State Governor and the Inspector General of Police on the matter.

He said, “I have been to the scene also and I have written petitions to the Lagos State Government and the Inspector General of Police. I told one of my colleagues who said her sister was staying at the Airport Hotel on that night. She used to go to that spot to buy food almost every night for her children. During the incident, someone called her not to come out because the police were killing people. When she said that, I knew that people were aware of the operation that night.

“The family is demanding for compensation. They have spent a lot already even before the burial. Their breadwinner is gone. Imagine a 67-year-old man with three wives and 12 children working that late into the night.”

A copy of the petition filed on the matter to both the Lagos State Governor and the Inspector General of Police by Apata was obtained by our correspondent. It described the incident as gruesome murder by the police.

“We are solicitors to Mr. Ahmed Olaoye and other members of his family (our clients) and it is on his instruction and behalf that we write this petition.

“Our clients’ father, Mr. Sulaimon Olaoye, who was a taxi cab operator at the Murtala Muhammad Airport Taxi Park, was brutally murdered in cold blood by men of the Nigeria Police and his corpse was also seized and withheld from his family members for burial.

“The slain man who had three wives and 12 children, drove a *Toyota Corolla* car painted with the official Lagos taxi colour with registration No. XT 270 FKJ, and was until his death a law-abiding citizen of this country who peacefully went about his lawful business.

“On Wednesday, August 6, 2014 at about 11pm, the slain Mr. Sulaimon Olaoye dropped a passenger around the Lagos Airport Hotel on Obafemi Awolowo Way, Ikeja. He parked his car in front of the Mobil Petrol Station beside the hotel and crossed to Alade Avenue opposite to buy water from the petty trader at the junction of the street.

“Suddenly, the men of the Nigeria Police swooped on the area shooting sporadically and indiscriminately. There was pandemonium with bullets flying around and when calm eventually returned there were about seven people dead and some other people injured. Among the dead victims of the Police attack was Mr. Sulaimon Olaoye.

“Our clients are appealing to you, Sir, to use your good offices to investigate this act of police brutality and barbarity and bring the perpetrators of this heinous crime to book.”

Saturday PUNCH also gathered that the son of a petty trader who sold barbecue at the junction where the incident happened was also hit by bullet. The boy has been taken to his hometown for treatment, according to witnesses.

The Deputy Police Public Relations Officer, ASP Lelma Kolle, said he was unable to

speak on the matter until the mystery surrounding it had been unraveled.

He said, “When, how and where this operation happened has not been reported. The identity of the police officers and their vehicle must have been known. You should come back to see the PRO on the matter when she resumes from her leave.”

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