



•Photo: Gbenro Adeoye

•Tawa

Gbenro Adeoye

She had a look of dejection about her as sympathisers milled around her family house known as Agbole Onilu (Onilu's compound) in Aliwo area of Ibadan, Oyo State capital.

A few sympathisers sat around her, murmuring words of consolation. Some of them appealed to her to take it easy and that the tragedy that befell her was God's will. Forty-one-year-old Tawa Usman only shook her head in response to the statements, with mournful eyes staring into space.

It was the fourth day after her eldest child, Toheeb, 20, was murdered and relatives had begun to worry about her health. Toheeb was the third child Tawa would lose to death; she had earlier lost two children to measles in their young age.

Toheeb's lifeless body was found on Thursday, January 29, 2015 in a Toyota Sienna SUV left on the road around the famous Central Mosque in Ikorodu, Lagos. His throat was slit.

A mother's pain

Tawa's words were few but they resonated with deep emotional pain.

"This world is cruel; why would anyone kill my son? He was a very gentle soul; he would never harm anyone," she said to no one in particular.

A dark lump had formed below her left eye, which one of the sympathisers present blamed on too much weeping. Relatives said she had not been eating well since she received the sad news which was why she was taken from her home to their family house. They also said she had sometimes been hysterical.

One of Tawa's claims is to have been seeing Toheeb's ghost since receiving news of his death. She said he had appeared to him twice already in real life and at other times, in her dreams.

"I didn't believe he was dead even when I heard the news. I couldn't bring myself

I'VE TOLD MY SON'S GHOST TO GET JUSTICE

—Tawa, mother of slaughtered driver



•Photo: Family

•The late Toheeb

to accept that Toheeb was dead. It was when I saw people crying that I finally accepted it was true," she recalled.

"On Saturday, I came out of the house early in the morning and saw him seated. I was shaking and couldn't move. My head felt big but I'm sure I saw him. I kept telling him that I wanted justice for anyone responsible for his death. I have told his ghost to get justice. I'm not having any more children. I told him to deliver justice to whoever was responsible for his death. I've been seeing him since then."

The tragedy

Toheeb's death is still shrouded in mystery. After his secondary school education, Toheeb trained as a tailor before moving to Ikorodu, Lagos State about three years ago in search of a better life, even though, reports of crime and violence in the metropolis had filled his family members in Ibadan with trepidation. Once in Lagos, Toheeb worked as a commercial driver in Ikorodu.

"He wanted to make a reasonable living for himself. He was hard working and thought the tailoring business was not bringing enough for the family," Tawa said.

"We never wanted him to go to Lagos because we knew he was very gentle. We felt he was too gentle for the job. But he insisted there was money in the transportation business. One day, he told me, 'Please let me go to Lagos since you're also struggling. Let me go and try my luck to see if I can make money to take care of us.'"

Relatives said Toheeb's dream was to own vehicles to start his transportation business, but expressed sadness that it was cut short before its prime.

As some sympathisers left Agbole Onilu

in Ibadan, Oyo State, others arrived. Our correspondent learnt the situation has been like that since news of Toheeb's death reached his family in Ibadan.

Saturday PUNCH also learnt from eyewitnesses and police sources that a commercial driver identified as Sunday Orobo was the last person suspected to have seen Toheeb before his death.

According to their accounts, Sunday called on Toheeb, who was at the Ibadan garage on Sagamu Road in Ikorodu on Thursday afternoon, to join him to make some trips.

It was learnt that Sunday, like Toheeb, is an indigene of Ibadan. However, there were no indications that they were related or had known each other from Ibadan.

Toheeb reportedly joined Sunday, who was driving a Toyota Sienna. Two unidentified persons were said to have also been in the vehicle, but it was only Sunday who allegedly came down of the vehicle.

"Later that evening, some police officers from Sagamu Road division came to the park to say a man was at their station to report that his Sienna, which fitted the profile of the one Sunday drove, was missing," said an eyewitness who didn't want to be named.

"And just as they were making inquiries, someone came and said he sighted the Sienna close to the Central Mosque. The police and some other people went there and saw the vehicle. It appeared that no one was inside but when they opened the boot, they saw Toheeb's dead body with his throat slashed.

"His body was put in a police vehicle and taken to an undisclosed mortuary."

The incident has since thrown the Usmans into confusion over who might

have wanted Toheeb dead. Meanwhile, his father, Akeem, has been visiting Ikorodu to claim his son's body to initiate burial arrangements according to Islamic rites, but has been told that investigation into his death was ongoing.

Saturday PUNCH learnt that the police found a bloodstained machete at Toheeb's one room apartment in Ikorodu, where he lived alone until his death. With the finding, the police suspected that Toheeb was killed in his residence before his body was put in the vehicle.

A police source suspected Toheeb's killer abandoned the Sienna because it developed fault, but with the plan to return with another vehicle to put the corpse.

Our correspondent learnt that other occupants of the building were being questioned by the police in relation to the incident.

A call for justice

Meanwhile, Tawa has barely coped since her son's death. Each day, she's driven by thoughts of seeing that Toheeb gets justice.

"I want justice for my child. All the people responsible for his death should be apprehended and dealt with," she said.

She feared that whoever killed Toheeb had done it for ritual purposes.

She said she believed "they wanted to sell his body to ritualists before the vehicle developed fault and therefore had to abandon the vehicle and body there."

It has been a sad moment for the Usmans and knowing the nature of Toheeb's death seemed to have worsened the agony for the family. For instance, Tawa has been dreading seeing her son's corpse following the gruesome attack.

"They say Toheeb was slaughtered; I don't want to see my son like that. It will kill me," she said as tears welled up in her eyes.

Similar incidents

Toheeb's murder followed recent ones in the state which were carried out in similar fashion.

On December 14, 2014, an insurance practitioner and lawyer, Mrs. Ola Adeola, was found dead in her home at Oniru Estate, Lagos with her throat slit.

Two weeks earlier, Mrs. Martha Ifewulu, was also found dead on a staircase in her Oke-Afa, Isolo residence in Lagos with her throat slit, prompting rumours she might have been targeted since nothing was stolen from the house.

Spokesperson for the Lagos State Police Command, Mr. Kenneth Nwosu, told our correspondent that Toheeb's case had been transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department, Pantti. He added that one suspect was in police custody in connection with the crime.