

# Pupil dies after slap from principal's secretary

April 3, 2016



**•Iyanuoluwa before the incident**



**•Iyanuoluwa after the incident**

Nine months after, the family of Miss Iyanuoluwa Dahunsi are still haunted by the incident that led to their daughter's tragic, but preventable death.

The late pupil, then an SS2 pupil of Bishop Philip Academy, Ibadan, Oyo State, was hospitalised after she was reportedly slapped by Mrs. Funke Fashina, who was then the secretary to the school's principal, on January 29, 2015.

Dahunsi developed an eye problem that same day. And despite frequent visits to different hospitals for treatment and medication, the affected eyeball kept bulging out every day.

Although Fashina was later arrested and charged to court for the slap, the affected pupil, sadly, never recovered from it.

Barely six months later, and five days after her fifteenth birthday, Dahunsi died on July

22, 2015 at the Lagos University Teaching Hospital.

An aunt to the late pupil, Mrs. Yetunde Orindare-Ajayi, recalled, "A few days before Dahunsi's death, she was referred to the University of Benin Teaching Hospital, but she died on the day we were to travel there. She died in my hands at the hospital. On her birthday on July 17, she requested that I cooked fresh fish for her, but she could barely eat it. She suffered so much before her death."

Due to a mounting hospital bill estimated to be more than N1m, her corpse was not released at the morgue to her family until Oyo State Governor Abiola Ajimobi intervened seven months later.

As a result, the late Dahunsi, who was the older of her parent's two children, was only buried on February 12, 2016.

However, in an unexpected twist, last Thursday, Orindare-Ajayi, who spoke on behalf of the deceased's mother, said the process of withdrawing the case from court had begun, and even though the date of the next hearing was scheduled for April 29.

Orindare-Ajayi noted that the intervention of Governor Ajimobi and the fact that no favourable ruling from the court would bring back their daughter made the family to consider withdrawing the case from the court.

Their decision to withdraw the case from court nevertheless, the late pupil's aunt said the family are still bearing the pain from the events that led to her hospitalisation and death.

She said, "She was always with me and even when the incident happened, she was living with me. Her mother is my sister. That was why I referred to her as my daughter."

In an emotion-laden voice, a family friend of the Dahunsis, who preferred anonymity and said he had signed the release form of the deceased corpse, recalled, "We learnt that on that day (January 2015), a teacher entered her classroom and ordered those who were not taking the subject to leave. She was leaving with some of her friends when the school principal's secretary, Mrs. Fashina, met them along the corridor.

"Instead of asking the pupils questions about their mission outside the classroom, she began to beat them one by one. In the process, her hand hit Dahunsi's eye. She did not take it seriously but she told her aunt (Orindare-Ajayi), who she was living with at the time when she got home. Her aunt told her that she must have done something wrong which warranted the discipline.

"However, she bought eye drop and applied it to the affected eye. There was mid-term break at the time but before the school resumed again, the eye had gone worse. The mother visited the school to demand for what Fashina used to slap her daughter. There was an argument over the issue but when her father also visited the school, it was resolved that a test be carried out at an optical laboratory in Eleta area of Ibadan."

He said the result showed there was a fracture around the eye, which also resulted in clotting of blood around the affected area. He noted that the principal and Fashina rejected the result because it implicated the woman who had slapped Dahunsi.

The family friend added, "They said they had someone at the University College Hospital and demanded that another test be carried out at the UCH. According to the new scan result, a tumour was detected and that it was not as a result of the slapping. The consultant said the sum of N300,000 was needed to do a surgery. The result was in the custody of the principal and Fashina.

"The parents agreed that the surgery be done, but the necessary document needed by the hospital was not released by the principal and the secretary. The police had to be involved before the document was released three days after. By then, the girl had suffered so much."

The case, he noted, was compounded by the inability of the parents to raise the amount needed for surgery immediately and the refusal of Fashina or the school to help, claiming that the new scan had exonerated the woman.

The surgery was later carried out after the Chief Medical Director of UCH, Prof. Temitope Alonge, was notified by Dahunsi's aunt. By then, more damage had been done. Her head had swollen and she could no longer see with the affected right eye.

At the Lagos University Teaching Hospital, where she was later referred to, Dahunsi's condition grew worse as she could no longer walk, her parents said she was also using diaper. She spent her 15th birthday on the hospital bed and in unbearable pain.

Orindare-Ajayi said she had taken Dahunsi's picture on the bed and displayed it at Mushin market to raise money for her treatment.

"We sold everything we had to treat her and when there was nothing to sell again, we were using her picture to beg for money in Mushin area of Lagos and at the hospital gate. Before coming to Lagos, Seyi Makinde gave us money but everything was spent at UCH.

"Because she could not move around again, we were using adult diapers for her. We were buying six pieces for N2,500. One of her daily injections cost N3000 and she took four in a day. I have all the receipts," she said.

Orindare-Ajayi told our correspondent that the family didn't initially wish to take the matter to court, but the attitude of the school and that of Fashina informed the decision of the police to charge the secretary to court.

She said, "I reported the case at Adelubi police station in Alakia area of Ibadan when it was obvious that the school principal was shielding the secretary who slapped our daughter. When I went to the school, I said I was only interested in how the girl would be treated but the school did not let me meet her. It was when the police got involved that she was brought out.

"Her husband went to the station to insult the policemen so the Divisional Police Officer decided to transfer the case to the State Criminal Investigation Department in Iyaganku."

Orindare-Ajayi said that it was more painful that until Dahunsi's death, Fashina did not apologise or visit her in hospital.

She said, "Neither Fashina nor any of her relative visited us in the hospital or send anything to her. After her death, the charge against Fashina was changed to murder.

"The day of the next hearing date in court is April 29 but we have decided to withdraw the

case from court. We felt that it was useless pursuing the case and moreover, Governor Ajimobi had intervened. Victory at the court will not revive our daughter who has gone to the lord to rest. The process of withdrawing the case began last Thursday.

"Our daughter was a lovely, honest and adorable child. Apart from her schooling, she was also training to become a fashion designer. She would have completed it soon if she had not died. Our solace is that she had Christ. If Fashina did not slap her in the eye, she would be alive today," she said.

When contacted, the school principal, Iyabo Oladepo, told our correspondent on the telephone that her position as a civil servant did not allow her to speak on the matter, especially after the state government had waded in. She also said she no longer had anything to do with the case.

Efforts to reach Fashina failed as everyone close to her refused to give our correspondent her number.

Also, the Public Relations Officer of the Oyo State Police Command, Adekunle Ajisebutu, told our correspondent on Friday that he had yet to be notified of the family's decision to withdraw the case from court.

Speaking on behalf of the governor on the matter, Ajimobi's Senior Special Assistant, Print and Broadcast Media, Akin Oyedele, said the concerned employee (Fashina) was retired from service while the principal was also transferred after being found culpable. He said the government would not condone any act capable of tarnishing the image of the state government.

He said, "The government is again using this opportunity to pray for the repose of the soul of the deceased and for the Almighty to grant the parents and her loved one the fortitude to bear the sad loss.

"Those allegedly found to be culpable in the incident that culminated in the hospitalisation of the deceased have been sanctioned by the state's Teaching Service Commission after thorough investigation.

"The support staff at the centre of the incident was retired compulsorily by TESCOM after due process had been followed, while the principal was moved to another school, having been found not to be directly complicit."

He added, "Admission of corporal punishment has rules, regulations and procedures, which is known to every stakeholder in the school system; a violation of which will not be condoned under any guise. We are using this opportunity to again remind all school heads to follow these rules and regulations to the letter before subjecting any pupil to corporal punishment in order not to incur the wrath of the government."

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