

Our sons' blood will cry out against their killers

– Parents of missing boys found dead in church premises

• Police to deploy dogs to search crime scene

Kunle Falayi

They were seen playing at 4pm on Sunday April 3, 2016. By 6.30pm, they had vanished. The bodies of six-year-old Isaac Ayegbo, a primary two pupil, and four-year-old Ayomide Innocent, a nursery one pupil, would later be found in a car parked on the premises of Christ Crusaders' Deliverance Ministry, Lanbe, Lagos in a grisly murder that has set on edge the children's quiet Matogun community in Lanbe.

The church is just few metres away from the homes of the children's parents.

On Thursday, when *Saturday PUNCH* visited the homes of the children's parents, they walked our correspondent through the critical time frame of their disappearance up till the following day when they were found dead.

The narration ended with each parent sighing and swearing bitterly that the blood of their children would cry out of the ground to ensure their killer was caught.

Isaac's mother, Omolola, spoke few words. Her bulging and red eyes were signs of the incessant sobbing she had been doing since Wednesday, which was the day her husband, Abiodun, finally summoned the courage to inform her that their son's body had been found.

Even despite that, maternal denial would not allow her to accept that her child was actually dead.

"I would never believe my son is dead. Ever! Until I see his body, I would never believe he is dead," she told our correspondent.

Omolola's state of denial has to do with the fact that she has yet to reconcile herself with the fact that her son and his playmate, who were "merely playing outside" could later be found dead.

She said, "My son had never ventured into that church compound to play and neither had his friend, Ayomide. No child can possibly go into that church compound to play because the compound is always locked."

"The two boys had changed their clothes after we came back from church. They were wearing their underwear alone when they went outside to play around 4pm. By 6.30pm when I was no longer hearing their voices outside, I called out to Isaac. When I did not hear their voices and they did not answer my call, I was not still worried."

"Even when my call for the boys started to catch the attention of our neighbours, I still did not believe anything bad could have happened to them. We went from house to house and people kept telling us that they would show up. But now, I was told that my son's body was found in a vehicle in the church. Well, God is on the throne. I am sure his blood will cry out from the ground and reveal the face of the killer whether it is one person or more."

Isaac's father said he still could not wrap his head around the fact that the



• Isaac and Ayomide

killer of the boys might have finalised his plan when the whole neighbourhood was busy looking for them.

A pastor of the church, who is now in custody of the Department of Criminal Investigation, Elewera, Abeokuta, Ogun State, had told the police that some members of the church discovered the bodies of the boys when they wanted to take a nap inside the car. But our correspondent noticed a luxurious bus parked beside the car in which the boys' bodies were found when he visited the church premises.

A pair of pink slippers of one of the boys lay on the back seat of the vehicle, a tragic symbol of a crime, whose mystery may never be fully unravelled.

Saturday PUNCH also learnt on Thursday that when the boys' bodies were found, their noses were bloody while their mouths were foamy.

Abiodun said, "I reported at the Agbado Police Division around 11pm on Sunday when we still had not found the children. When the police summoned me to the police station the following day, I thought they had found the boys."

"But when I got to the station and peeped over their counter and did not see the boys, I knew something terrible had happened. When I went to meet the police at the crime scene, they hid the fact that they found the bodies of the boys there. I was directed away from the premises as they removed the bodies from the compound."

"I was told to proceed to the police station. One of the policemen handling the case simply told me to go to a vehicle standing outside the station. A policeman opened the boot only for me to see the bodies of the boys. I can never recover from the shock of seeing the bodies of the boys in that boot still in the underpants they were wearing when they went missing. We are waiting for the autopsy, which the police said would be conducted on the bodies of the boys."

Nouanti Innocent, Ayomide's father, a citizen of the Republic of Benin, who has not been himself since he learnt about the fate of his boy, nearly committed suicide on Monday when he saw his son's body, our correspondent learnt.

Residents of their neighbourhood said he was about to run into a speeding trailer, when he was pulled back and taken to the hospital where doctors sedated him.

But on Thursday, when our



• The Ayegbos



• The vehicle in which the boys' bodies were found. A pair of slippers of one of the boys (arrowed)

correspondent visited the community, Innocent stood glumly, as he shook his head repeatedly.

When asked if his wife had been informed he said yes. "What she is going through now, I cannot even describe how bad it is. But I know God is in heaven. The spirit of these children would not sleep until their killer is found," he said.

Innocent's wife had gone back to their hometown in the Republic of Benin few days before the boys went missing. He was so close to the Ayegbo family that he suggested that they kept Ayomide with them since he was Isaac's good playmate.

Unknown to him, the fate of both boys was sealed.

The Ogun State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Abdulmajid Ali, sent a delegation to the scene of the crime on Wednesday with promises that a full-scale investigation would be conducted to unravel the mystery of the children's death.

He promised that a canine unit would be deployed to search the premises of the church as part of the investigation.

The Ogun State Police spokesperson, DSP Muyiwa Adejobi, had said that the pastor of the church, Babatunde Olakunle, and the gardener, Adewale Babalola, were being held at the SCID, Elewera, Abeokuta, pending the conclusion of investigation.

Church's general-overseer places curse on boys' killer

The General Overseer of Christ Crusaders' Deliverance Ministry, Pastor Festus Adewole, said how the bodies of the



• Innocent

children ended up in the vehicle within the premises of his church was still a mystery.

According to him, the compound is a camp ground while the abandoned vehicle belongs to a church member.

He said, "My greatest pain is the innocent lives that have been wasted. We raised a prayer in the church yesterday that whoever is involved in the death of the children, his generation would be wiped out."

"This case will come and go but what about the lives of the children that have been cut short? Whoever is involved will bury his own children one after the other."

"We had a five-day vigil in all our branches that day and some people were at the camp ground for the vigil too. It is about two acres of land. We have been there since 2004."

"The bodies were discovered when some members wanted to sleep in the car. Immediately they called us to inform us of the discovery, I sent people to the Ajuwon Police Division, but they said the area was under the jurisdiction of the Agbado Police Division."

According to him, when the police from Agbado eventually came to pick up the bodies, they had to leave through the back gate of the compound to avoid a crowd of residents that had gathered at the front gate.

The church leader said, "God will vindicate us. I know the truth will come out. An autopsy should be carried out as soon as possible. When the truth comes out, we will know the side of God on the issue. I cannot say whether anybody wants to implicate our church. But it is still a mystery that the corpses of the children were found in the car."

"Life is so precious to me. Any community we get to, we try to positively influence the people. I wonder why anybody would do something like this. I don't know how the children could have got there."