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Family accuses DPO of shooting policeman dead

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Onajide Onalaja

Deji Lambo and Oluwatosin Omojuyigbe

The family of Sergeant Onajide Onalaja has accused the Divisional Police Officer of the Ilemba Hausa Division, Yahaya Adesina, of shooting him dead in the Ilemba Hausa area of Lagos State.

PUNCH Metro gathered that after Onalaja was killed, the Divisional Traffic Officer of the station, Adekunle Ogundiji, reportedly contacted the victim's wife, Folasade, and told her that her husband was shot dead by armed robbers when a team of policemen was monitoring compliance with the lockdown at a checkpoint in the area.

Shocked by the information, Folasade requested to see her husband's corpse, but she was told that it had been deposited in the Lagos Mainland Hospital's morgue in Yaba.

On getting to the mortuary, the mother of three observed bullet wounds on Onalaja's chest, adding that marks of torture were also observed on his body, because his uniform was torn.

She said, "On Monday, May 11, 2020, a policeman, Adekunle Ogundiji, said my husband had a serious accident and urged me to look for money for his treatment. I asked where my husband was, but he told me to come, so I left Ijebu-Ode for the station.

"I asked what killed him when I got there and was told that he was shot dead by armed men at a checkpoint in front of the station. I was told that four policemen were at the checkpoint and that they were passing vehicles when the armed men suddenly opened fire and shot my husband dead.

"I demanded to see his corpse, but I was told that it had been deposited in the mortuary in Yaba. An officer, identified simply as Eko, took me to the mortuary but we could not see the corpse, because we had no document to present for identification. So, I became annoyed and started shouting at the policeman, because I didn't know why he could not present the identification document.

"The policeman started shivering and said, '*I no get hand oo, my hand no dey oo, I just come to work this morning, I still see Jide yesterday oo*'. He later called his boss, who informed him that the person with the paper was in Ikorodu and that we would have to wait till the following day.

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"When I saw my husband's corpse the next day, I did not believe the story they told me. I saw bullet wounds on his chest; his uniform was rough; he was no longer wearing a singlet; and his trousers had been torn.

"I believe something strange happened before he died and I want an investigation. Later on, about four policemen hid their numbers when they called to inform me that the DPO, Yahaya Muhammed Adesina, shot my husband dead with a locally-made gun and I recorded the conversations. I have petitioned the Zone 2 Command, because I want justice."

In the audio recording made available to one of our correspondents, a policeman was heard saying the DPO had been trying to cover up the crime, adding that he told them to manipulate how the incident happened on Sunday, May 10, 2020.

The suspected policeman said, “I will tell you everything. Yesterday, when that incident happened, the DPO ran to the CP and the DC to claim that it was not a police rifle, but he was told to face his warrant. Instead of him to tell you the truth when you came, he denied. The Area Commander has ordered his arrest and said we should record his statement while in detention.

“They recorded his statement and the pump action gun that he used to fire has also been recovered. He has been begging that the statement should be changed, but I don’t want anything to change in the statement. According to what I am hearing, they called from Abuja and a signal has been sent so that the case can be moved there. As he is begging that they should change the statement, I hope it won’t be changed.

“Instead of him to confess, he is trying to manipulate and that guy (Onalaja) was our colleague, that is why I didn’t accept. He (Adesina) is the one who killed that young man and was telling me nonsense in order to leave him. I will be giving you a feedback on any strange thing now that I have your number. Sorry!”

Onalaja’s elder brother, Tunde, while demanding justice, urged the police authorities to investigate the case to unravel the true circumstances surrounding the killing.

When contacted on Sunday, Ogundiji said, “I am not involved; I am a DTO and we don’t use rifles. I didn’t work on that day because I was in church. The account of what we heard was that a gunshot from somewhere hit him (Onalaja) and the DPO. The DPO showed us the jacket where the pellets pierced through to destroy his two phones, and hit Onajide in the chest.”

However, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Bala Elkana, said two persons had been arrested in connection with Onalaja’s killing, adding that investigation was ongoing.

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Elkana said in a statement on Sunday, “On Saturday, May 16, 2020, around 3pm, detectives from the Ilemba Hausa Police Station arrested one Kehinde Elijah, 45. He is among the three suspects on the police wanted list for violent crimes. The second suspect, Ezech Joseph, was arrested in his

apartment at the Imude Pako area, Era Road, Ajangbadi, on May 17, 2020, around 6am. He claimed to have deserted the military while undergoing basic military training.

“They were arrested in respect of the shooting and killing of Sergeant Onalaja Onajide, who was attached to the Ilemba Hausa Division. The shooting happened on Sunday, May 10, 2020, around 9.40pm, when gunmen fired at the DPO, Ilemba Hausa, and the Station Guard, Sergeant Onalaja Onajide. The DPO survived the gunshots, but Onalaja died from pellet wounds. An investigation led to the arrest of the two.

“The first suspect was earlier at the station to solicit the release of his motorcycle, which was impounded by the police for violating the ban on the use of commercial motorcycles. Not happy with the DPOs refusal to release the motorcycle to him, he decided to launch the deadly attack. Investigation is ongoing. The suspects will soon be charged.”