

# Policemen watched as we carried apprentice tailor they killed in Lagos –Eyewitness

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Published [November 7, 2020](#)



*Kingsley Charles, 34, is an entrepreneur who risked getting shot at in an attempt to rescue a 20-year-old apprentice tailor, Femi Orojo, who was allegedly killed by officers attached to the Pedro Police Station, Somolu, Lagos State on October 21. He shares his experience with TOBI AWORINDE*

***What happened on the day Femi Orojo was killed?***

When the incident happened, I wasn't there. I was told about it because the whole of that day, there were shootings in the area. I live about 500m from Pedro Police Station. Femi was an apprentice in one of the shops close to where I live, so we knew him quite well. The incident occurred a street away from where I live. I don't know exactly what happened and how it happened. But one thing I was told is that policemen from Pedro Police Station (Somolu, Lagos State) were shooting at Bolaji Omupo Street. Femi's younger brother said they wanted to pass the Pedro Police Station, but those guys chased them back, saying they couldn't pass that place.

But while they were trying to go back and pass through Bolaji Omupo Street, to be able to access another street leading to where they were going, officers of the police station started shooting. I don't know exactly why.

The gate at the end of Bolaji Omupo Street was locked; that I am very sure of. The police officers then put their guns through the openings in the gate and started shooting into the street. That was how the bullet hit Femi. He fell beside a gutter while he was running for his life. I have a video showing where he fell.

We couldn't get to him for more than one hour because the policemen kept on shooting and it went on for a long time. Everybody was scared to go and carry Femi. It was well over an hour before we were able to get to where his body was. By then, it was too late.

***Were you at home when you started hearing the gunshots?***

Yes, I was.

***How long after the Lekki shootings of October 20 did this incident happen?***

It happened the following morning. This incident happened on October 21.

***The atmosphere in the area must have been tense...***

Yes, it was. I understand that officers at Pedro Police Station were probably trying to prevent an attack on them. But the truth is that they had no excuse for shooting straight into the street. I can understand if you are shooting into the air, but when you are aiming at people, I don't know the explanation or justification one can give for that. Femi was just about 19 years old. He wasn't the only one that was shot there but the other ones were fortunate enough to have survived. Bullets hit them and they were not fatal. People were able to get to get them to hospital in time.

***Were any of your neighbours injured?***

No, but there was so much tension. I sent my girlfriend somewhere to buy me something at a bus stop around the area before the shooting started. Everybody was so scared. I kept calling her but she could not even bring out her phone, let alone pick up the call. It happened for the whole day. I could not also use my car to pick Femi up because almost nobody wanted me to go.

Everybody was so scared that something could happen to me if I went there. Even when we were picking up Femi's body, some of the policemen were at the gate, looking at us. We had to hide. I can't explain the experience because I had to drive in a way that would not make them think I had an ulterior motive and start shooting at me when I went to pick him up. It was a very terrifying experience. It is one experience that no one would ever want to witness.

***How many of you went to pick up Femi's body?***

There were four or five of us. The tailor under whom Femi was under his tutelage was also there. His mother also came. We had to sneak there and use some cars there as a shield so that bullets would not hit us. That was how we were able to pick him up.

***How difficult was it to get the body to the mortuary, because of the curfew?***

It was quite difficult because when we got to the mortuary, they initially refused to accept the body. But after a while, we had to pay some money. But one of the reasons it was difficult was that they insisted that we had to produce his death certificate. And since we couldn't take him to the hospital because he didn't die there, there was no way we could get a death certificate. So, we had to pay some money and then promise that we would find a way to get a death certificate to give to them. It took about two hours before they accepted the body at the mortuary.

***Where was Femi shot?***

He was shot in the back and the bullet came out from his chest. His family has a photograph of his corpse. Everybody was very scared and we couldn't just leave his body there. Also, all the gates along the streets had been locked. Even the people with the keys refused to come out of their houses to open the gates for us to get to his body. Even as we were carrying his body, the police kept shooting. It is an experience nobody wants to have twice. All through the night, the police kept shooting.