

Security agents offered to take ransom to our abductors before my dad was killed —Olorunsola, kidnap victim

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Olorunsola Daramola was kidnapped alongside his 52-year-old father, Idowu Daramola, last month in Ekiti State. In this chat with ABIODUN NEJO, he narrates how the abductors shot dead his dad and the family's ordeals in the bid to recover his body for burial

Why were you and your dad together on the road that day?

My dad, who was a contractor resident in Ado Ekiti, and I travelled down to Ise Ekiti from Ado Ekiti to see my grandmother, that is, my dad's mother.

At what point did the incident happen?

It was about 400 metres or so away from the military checkpoint on the Ikere-Ise Road. It was before the checkpoint if you are coming from Ise Ekiti and going towards Ikere Ekiti.

How did it happen?

It was on Sunday, October 11, between 4.30pm and 5pm. We were returning to Ado Ekiti from Ise Ekiti, where we had gone to visit my grandma. Along the road, we heard a sound, which my dad thought was a ruptured tyre, so he stopped to check whether it was his tyre that got spoilt, but in his attempt to get out of the car, guns were pointed at our heads and we were captured. That was how we were taken into custody by the kidnappers.

How many people were in the car that day?

Just the two of us.

So, how many days did you spend in the kidnappers' den?

We were kidnapped on Sunday and I was released on Friday around 11pm.

From the conversation of the kidnappers, what part of the country are they from?

They are from the northern part of the country, because they spoke a language that sounded like Fulfude. They are Fulani; perhaps, they are Fulani herdsmen.

What was the experience like in the kidnappers' den in terms of food, drink, sleeping and excretion?

We were taken far into the bush. We were not given food. I learnt that the kidnappers called my family on Monday around 2pm to inform them that my dad and I had been abducted and that to get us back alive, the family would have to pay a ransom of N100m. We were not given food or water; we were just made to walk round the bush with our hand tied behind us at night. At times, we were made to drink our urine.

What was an average day like with the kidnappers?

They were always making us to roam about aimlessly in the bush. They did not stay in the same place and all along, they were beating us with cutlass and sticks.

How many were the kidnappers?

There were five of them.

It was learnt that your dad was killed. How did it happen?

Yes. They killed him.

Why?

Because we were not given food and water, he spoke up on Thursday on behalf of all the victims. He was of the opinion that since the kidnappers were going to get ransom from us, at least, they should give us water and food. But they were not going to take that from him and he would not keep quiet as well. He queried why the kidnappers, who were eating and drinking, would starve the victims, who they would get money from at the end of the day. He was fighting for others so that we could get food and drink, especially me because of my condition as I have ulcer. So, because he was fighting for others, they shot him.

While we were there, the family went to the police station, where they collected money from them in the hope that they would be able to secure our release before that Thursday when they shot my dad dead. I still believe the police did not do anything about it. They took my dad's car to their station at Ikere Ekiti, where hoodlums vandalised it during the #EndSARS protest.

At that point when your dad spoke up, why didn't you advise him that such could be dangerous?

I was not there. I did not witness it because we were separated. We were not put in the same place.

There are insinuations that your dad asked to be killed rather than taking his own urine. How true is this?

People will say what they like. You know the kind of society we are in.

How was your release secured?

One of my younger brothers came to give the kidnappers the ransom on Friday. They told him to meet them in the bush around 9pm. He was there with them. According to him, three young Fulani guys dressed in military camouflage with rifles came to the agreed location to collect the ransom.

How much was the ransom?

The amount did not matter. At that point, the lives of two members of the family – the family's breadwinner and I – were at stake. So, the amount did not matter.

Did the family know at that time that your dad had been killed?

No.

How many victims were in the kidnappers' den that time?

Four of us.

When your brother brought the money to the kidnappers, how did he locate where they were?

They called him and told him to come down to the point where they were at the most dangerous part of the road. He was told not to come with a car and that he should come on a motorcycle. The motorcyclist dropped him off and left. Three of the kidnappers dressed in military camouflage with rifles surfaced and took him into the bush, collected the money from him and counted it.

But wasn't he afraid for his life?

He was of the opinion that death is a price we all have to pay one day. He said he did not really know what came over him that made him not to be scared. All he just wanted that night was to get his family members back. That was the only thing he could think of at that material time.

Why was your stay in the den prolonged?

The kidnappers were asking the family for N100m. Who can raise that kind of money in this hard economy? They were said to have reduced it to N50m and then N20m.

Were you released the day your brother took the money there?

Yes. My brother was in the bush for about an hour. They told him to wait that his family members would come down to him. He was hoping to see my dad and I, but I was the only person that came. When I came out, I just told my brother that they separated me from dad from the moment we were kidnapped. This was because I did not want to break the news there in order not to aggravate the already complex situation. We now went to the military checkpoint, which was near where we were kidnapped. It was the military men who took us from the checkpoint to one of their officers at the GRA in Ado Ekiti. That was how we got to Ado Ekiti that night.

We passed the night there before we went home on Saturday morning. But I still wonder that such an incident could happen in the vicinity of the military checkpoint. A man, who passed by on a motorcycle that Sunday said he somehow witnessed the abduction and went to the military checkpoint to inform them immediately.

So, what roles did the military play in effecting your release?

The first person in charge of the checkpoint told my brother that he sent his men into the bush so that they could find us immediately the incident occurred. But I did not see anybody coming after us when we were kidnapped. My family reported to the DSS, the police and the military. All they got were promises that they would go after the criminals. The security agents were even of the opinion that they would help deliver the ransom to the kidnappers as a snare to apprehend them, get us released as well have the money returned to the family. But the results were not seen. My brother risked his life that very night to go into the bush to drop the money. Nobody was there to help. The family did everything by itself and still lost its breadwinner.

In all these, what did the police do?

I was told that they collected money for tracking from the family. They also collected money they said they wanted to use to mobilise security people to go and find my dad.

The police at Ikere or Ado Ekiti?

The police at the Ikere Division. At first, when my brother reported at the police headquarters, Ado Ekiti, they said that SARS had been disbanded and that they could not do anything about it. He reported the same situation to the DSS at Ikere Ekiti, but all they kept telling the family was that they were working on it until the killing happened. And even up till now, they have not found my father's corpse and people are still extorting us of the little we have left that we should pay money so that they can mobilise to get my dad's remains so that we can at least give him the last honour.

How was the news of your dad's death broken to the family?

I told my brother later but I did not tell mum, because she was in hospital. I told my brother and others what happened.

Did the kidnappers use your phone or your dad's or a strange number to call your family?

Not ours. It was not a strange number either. It was the phone of one of the victims in the den that they used.

How many arrests have been made by the security agencies on the incident?

None. Instead, the police were quoted to have said that my dad's car was an exhibit of the kidnapping incident. They did not release it to the family until it was damaged at the police station by hoodlums during the #EndSARS protests. The hoodlums smashed the front and rear windshields and windows, and made away with the battery and some cash in the car and some documents.

You are still looking forward to seeing your dad's body, how is the family feeling about the development?

This is not a thing of honour to the family. Everyone is feeling bad. It is not a thing of honour. We are still calling on the DSS. The police at Ikere said they are not functioning at present since their offices had been burnt down during the #EndSARS protests. We contacted the OPC, they collected money from us for logistics a few days ago, hoping that they will get something, but they said they could not find anything.

What does the family want now?

It is to get out our dad from the forest. They should help us get out his corpse so that we can bury him and give him the honour and respect he deserved. He had a lot of family members who looked up to him.

Did your family have the opportunity to speak with him on the phone from the kidnappers' den?

Yes. He spoke with my younger brother. The last of such was on Wednesday, October 14. He asked my brother to try and get the money as soon as possible so that we could be released.