

Saturday interview

Police detained witnesses to my brother's shooting at Abuja viewing centre, kept CCTV footage – Sister of slain football enthusiast

A 34-year-old furniture maker, Emmanuel Samuel, was allegedly shot by trigger-happy policemen at a football viewing centre in Abuja, where he went to watch the Euro 2020 final between Italy and England. The football enthusiast later died. His sister, Veronica Samuel, accuses the police of frustrating the family's quest for justice, in this interview with **GODFREY GEORGE**

Who are you to Emmanuel Samuel that was shot at an Abuja football viewing centre during the Euro 2020 final?

Emmanuel Samuel is my younger brother. He was killed by police officers in Abuja when he went to watch the Euro 2020 final between Italy and England. He was 34 years old. I am the firstborn of the family; he is the third.

Were you there on the day the incident happened?

No, I was not. I was in Kaduna, where I am based. He lived in Abuja. He was a furniture maker.

How did you hear about the incident?

My other younger brother, Hosea Samuel, called me the following day after the incident, July 10, 2021, to tell me what had happened. The call came at about 6am. I had just woken up for my morning devotion and he called to tell me that Emmanuel had been shot. I was so confused. Who wouldn't? You wake up in the morning and you are greeted with bad news. I didn't bathe or even brush my teeth. I rushed to the bus park and boarded a bus to Abuja. I got to Abuja before 8am. I saw my brother and I began to weep.

What were you told to his shooting?

When I asked them what happened and who shot him, they told me that he was shot by a police officer at Emperor Gardens, Abuja, where he, his fiancée and their friends had gone to watch the Euro final. He was someone who loved soccer very much. They told me that, on that day, some policemen in uniform came to arrest one Jafaru at the garden. They said Jafaru was smoking Indian hemp and they had come to arrest him. One of them cocked his gun and faced the people in the bar. My brother, Emmanuel, then, told him to please be mindful of the position of his gun, so as not to shoot mistakenly at anyone and term it accidental discharge, especially as he had cocked his gun. So many people heard what he said. The policemen picked Jafaru and put him in their van. The place became a bit rowdy, so Emmanuel decided to leave with his fiancée. On his way, a few steps away, just across the road, he was shot by the police officer on the back of his thigh. This was at Sabuni One, MOPOP Barracks, around Dei Dei, Abuja. Everyone ran, including the officers and the Jafaru whom they had come to arrest. They drove their Hilux van and left. It was just Emmanuel's fiancée and his friends who, after some time, saw that Emmanuel was on the ground, bleeding, that took him to the hospital. That was where another 'Nigerian factor' played out. The hospital they rushed him to, Kubwa General Hospital, asked them for a police report before the could begin treatment. All the pleas by his fiancée and friends fell on deaf ears as the hospital said they were acting on 'government directive'.

When they refused to treat him, what did his friends do?

They quickly went to the nearby police station to explain what had happened. They told them that a police officer had just shot Emmanuel and they needed a police report so the doctors could commence treatment.

The police said it was impossible for one of their men to shoot anybody who was not a criminal. The youths became aggressive at some point at the station. They told the officers to come with them and stay with Emmanuel at the hospital if they felt he was a criminal, but they should save his life first. After much ado, the officers at the Gwa-Gwa Police Station referred them to another nearby hospital in Gwa-Gwa. There, they treated him unprofessionally.

Why do you say so?

They said they stitched his legs. Who stitches gunshot wounds with bandages on it? I have a video of everything that happened. Hosea, his brother, did a video of the treatment. A doctor friend whom I showed the video to said they don't stitch gunshot wounds. He told me, "Vera, find a way out of there!". The policemen were present when Emmanuel was being treated. They even wanted to cuff him while he received treatment. It was my brother, Hosea, who resisted the move. How do you handcuff someone who has just been shot, bleeding and receiving treatment? We recorded everything.

Did you move him out of that hospital following the advice by this doctor friend of yours?

I went to the Investigating Police Officer to ask her why she did not give my brother a police report so he could access good medical care. She didn't give a satisfying answer. I told her, "I have nothing, but if anything happens to my brother, I will make sure the police pay for it." I left. A policeman who knew Emmanuel was the one who dropped his identity card and signed as a surety before we were able to take him to another hospital, the Gwagwalada Teaching Hospital, Abuja, where he died eight days later. He was shot on July 9, 2021 and he died on July 19, 2021. When we got to the hospital, I called the IPO to come there to do whatever checks they wanted to do on him. She then followed me to the hospital and sat for a while and said, "We are into the case. We are investigating." I can tell you that these people were not into any case. They were telling me that if I knew where Jafaru was, I should produce him, or I should tell my brother to produce him.



Were your brother and Jafaru friends?

No, they were not. He only went there to have fun with his fiancée and friends and that was the only crime he committed. If he knew Jafaru, why put himself through all this stress till his death and allow the Jafaru roam the streets of Abuja a free man? The police should do their job; if they are looking for Jafaru, they should search for him well, but telling us to produce him is what I don't understand.

What happened after this?

When he died around 2pm on July 19, 2021, I called the IPO and told her I had lost my brother, and I was coming for them with all that I have. I went there the following day, took the remains of my brother to the Gwagwalada Teaching Hospital Mortuary, Abuja. The attendants said my bill was N25,000; I paid them N5,000, because I had spent over N100,000 when my brother was in the hospital. They were still insisting I get Jafaru for them. Am I a police officer? My brother just died after being shot by a police officer and they showed no empathy. I have not seen a more ruthless set of people all my life. They told me to provide the witnesses who saw what happened on the day Emmanuel was shot.

to write their statements. I brought them, and they detained them for three days. I was shocked to find out that they were detained by the same police who are supposed to protect them. Now, the guys have refused to talk to me after this, because they felt I conspired with the police to arrest them and get them detained. I did not. They are innocent. I know deep down.

Have the police given any update on the officer who did the shooting?

They are frustrating me. These police people are frustrating me. I have almost given up on the fight for justice for my brother. I lost my dad only six months ago – January 15, 2021 – and I am losing my brother the same year. I have not finished mourning dad. In our tradition, we don't keep corpses. I am from Kaduna State. Now, my family are angry with me; they want me to let go of everything. But I need justice. Everybody is asking me to give up on this case and go back to Kaduna.

What is delaying his burial?

The police have refused to release his corpse to me for burial. I have been on this case for more than three weeks. I have not rested since Emmanuel died. They wanted to release his corpse to me last week, but they said the case

was now with the Inspector General of Police, Usman Alkali Baba.

Did you petition the IG over the case?

I did not. It was the Southern Kaduna People's Union who petitioned the IG and the Nigeria Police. The police are saying until the IG gives a go-ahead order, they would not release the corpse. My family, on the one hand, blames me for fighting for justice in the first place. The police said they are investigating to find out who the officers that shot the bullets might be. They haven't even accepted it was one of their own who did it. They said it was only an assumption that they were not sure an officer of the rank would do that to a law-abiding citizen. I just need my brother's corpse released to me. There was a CCTV camera in that bar. Do you know the names of that place closed, so to have remembered that he had a CCTV camera in his bar? Nobody could remember they had a CCTV camera. It was me who came from Kaduna that spotted the camera on my first visit to the bar.

Was there CCTV footage from that day?

Yes, there is. I stormed the bar the very day I came and asked to use the owner of the place. They said the owner was not around, but I noticed he was watching me from the CCTV camera. I thought they must have told the police about the CCTV camera, but they said they didn't remember they had CCTV cameras installed in that bar. It was two weeks ago I told them to provide the CCTV camera for investigation. The police have collected the CCTV footage from that day and it has been with them since then. I have been going everyday for us to review the content, but they have been pushing it forward. Today (August 3, 2021), I was in the station from 9am till evening for the CCTV review and we didn't have it. They are even yet to turn it on.

Don't you think you need a lawyer at this point?

SOKEKAP got me a lawyer, but where is the money to pay him? On the day I met with him, he said his fee was N5,000. I didn't have that amount. All I had on that day was N1,000 and I gave him N1,000 and used N500 for transportation. I was not happy with that, because I know no lawyer would take that meagre fee for any case. I am hopeless right now. All I have is God. I am not sure the case has been filed in court.

You mentioned he was there with his fiancée. How does she feel about his death?

She feels so terrible about it. They had just a few months before their wedding and we were getting ready. Imagine watching your own fiancée being shot for committing a crime. I cannot even begin to imagine the trauma.

We prayed for safe trip to orientation camp, it's painful my son died in road accident – Grieving mum

Mrs Esther Akpan, the Akwa Ibom-based mother of Victor Joseph Akpan, one of the prospective National Youth Service Corps members who lost their lives in a ghastly motor accident en route to Katsina State for the programme shares her griefs with **PATRICK ODEY**

What do you do for a living?

I am a housewife. I am an NCE graduate. I tried my best after graduation to look for a job to no avail. Right now, I farm and produce palm oil to assist my husband in bringing up the children.

How many children do you have?

I have five children. Two have graduated from the university and the elder sister to Victor is currently doing her NYSC programme in Ekiti state.

What went through your mind when you heard about your son's death?

I did not believe it when I was told about the death of my son. Even now, it is still like a dream to me. I couldn't believe but I was shown the pictures of the accident; I was mad. And I am not happy in my heart because that boy was a boy after my heart.

Do you remember what it was like raising him?

My husband singlehandedly sponsored him, but it was not easy for us. My husband asked me one day if I wanted my children to go to school and I told him that, since I stopped at NCE level, I wanted my children to go higher. So, I started farming and cooking palm fruits to support my husband. My husband was a health worker, now he is retired.

Since the incident happened, has the NYSC reached out to your family?

It is only God that will reward the NYSC; they have done extremely well, especially the NYSC coordinator in the state. The Commissioner for Youth and Sports, Monday Uko was here with us to represent our state Governor, Udom

Emmanuel. The same goes for the Director General, NYSC; it is God that will bless them because they have done so much for the family.

What specifically did they do for the family?

They paid for the air fare of my late son, we wouldn't have had the money to do all those things they did for us. Even when the corpses arrived at the Victor Attah International airport, they paid for the ambulance that brought the corpse here.

In what way has the state government supported the family?

Governor Emmanuel has done well; he also helped. He sent his Commissioner for Youth and Sports, who was here in person. I have seen what they did but they should do more in order to console me and the family, even the father. Also, the government should care for NYSC members who are going out to serve the nation.

It wasn't easy for us to raise Victor and sponsor his education up to that level because there are five of them and two have graduated already. The elder sister is serving in Ekiti State.

Do you have any special requests concerning your daughter who is serving in Ekiti State?

I'm appealing to the NYSC for her redeployment back home to complete her NYSC programme because I will not be able to stay without seeing her, since Victor is no more.

What kind of care specifically do you want the state government to have for prospective NYSC members?

Whenever they're posting prospective NYSC members,

the government should assist, especially those posted to faraway towns like the late Victor. They should be cared for by way of subsidising their fares. The government should look for a registered transportation company with experienced drivers to take them to those places. I mean drivers who will listen to the passengers while driving. The survivors of that accident said they told the driver to wait till the following morning before continuing with the journey but the driver refused.

What were your son's last words before embarking on that journey?

He hugged me and, after hugging me, I told him we shall meet again by the end of August, when he would have left the orientation camp. I told him to seek redeployment and come closer home. The boy cried when I looked at his face. He knelt down at the parkour and his father and I prayed for God to protect him on his journey to Katsina State. But unfortunately, the boy left and, on Monday evening, I took him to Ikot Ekpeme, where he took a bike to the place at Ikot Ekpeme and from there to Uyo, the state capital. He spent that night with his friend in Uyo and on Tuesday morning, he called to say they were going to the University of Uyo gate to board a vehicle to Katsina.

But by midday, I called him and he told me that they had not left yet. Why? He said the driver was waiting for passengers to board the second bus. By 4pm, he called me back to say the bus had moved and I bade him farewell. By the time they reached Enugu, it was about 9pm, he called again to say they stopped to eat. I asked whether they would spend the night at Enugu but he told me the driver said they would continue the journey. Then I went to bed and by 5am in the morning of that day, I received the news that shocked me to the marrow.

What was his favourite pastime?
He was a prayer warrior, a chorister and a young preacher at The Apostolic Church.



«The late Akpan»