

Group suspects foul play in Osun murder suspects' killing

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Osun State Commissioner of Police, Olawale Olokode

A civil rights group, Osun Police Watch, has asked the state Governor, Gboyega Oyetola, to investigate the alleged killing of three murder suspects in the state.

PUNCH Metro had reported that some hoodlums exchanged gunfire with the police in Osunjela, a community around Osogbo-Ilesha Road, while conveying the suspects, Tope Gbenga, Olaide Okiki and Opeyemi Obaniwa, from court to a custodial centre.

The police claimed that the suspects sustained gunshot injuries during the attack and died at Asubiaro Hospital in Osogbo.

But the group, in a petition signed by its spokesperson, Oluwasegun Idowu, dated September 2, 2021, and addressed to Oyetola, alleged that the suspects had sustained gunshot wounds before they were taken to court.

The petition read in part, “The young men were arrested by men of the Oja Oba divisional police headquarters, Osogbo, and kept in police custody for up to six weeks without being arraigned in court, contrary to the clear stipulation of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999. By the time they were taken to court by the police, they had sustained bullet wounds in their legs, which were curiously left untreated.

“A fourth suspect, whose name was withheld, had earlier been questionably released by the police, while the remaining suspects with names listed above were later arraigned before the Osun State Magistrates’ Court presided over by Mr A. Adeyeba. Because the court lacked the jurisdiction to entertain the kind of offences allegedly committed, they were ordered to be remanded at the Ilesa Custodial Centre pending the issuance of legal advice by the Osun State Director of Public Prosecutions. However, the magistrate condemned the state in which the young men were presented (i.e. with untreated wounds).

“While transporting the suspects to the Ilesa Custodial Centre, the policemen alleged that they were attacked by unknown gunmen who attempted to hijack the suspects, and that in the process, four of the attackers were killed, while the three suspects sustained serious injuries during the crossfire. It was further reported that the three suspects died at the Asubiaro Hospital, which led to the intervention by this group.”

The group added that upon its investigation, it discovered that the fourth suspect was released by the police without trial despite being paraded by the state Commissioner of Police as an armed robber.

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Osun Police Watch, which noted that none of the policemen that allegedly engaged the hoodlums in a gun battle sustained an injury, said the police failed to produce the bodies of the hoodlums it claimed it killed and the weapons recovered.

“Contrary to claims of the police that the suspects died at the Asubiaro Hospital, a video record available to us showed that the victims died at the said point of the alleged attack in the bush.

“The police need to explain how men who were cuffed and who already had their legs getting decayed were found in the bush dead. We are not contesting whether or not the suspects were guilty of the crimes they were accused of, since that should have been determined by the court, but killing them in such a manner (which is suspicious) has denied them justice and is a dangerous precedence if not properly investigated,” the group added.

It urged Oyetola to order a coroner inquest to ascertain the circumstances surrounding the killings. „