

# Encounter

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## How 53-yr-old London returnee was killed, dumped in septic tank

• Daughter narrates ordeal as kidnappers get death sentence

By Henry Ojelu & Onozure Dania

**I**t's been six years since the Animashaun family in Surulere Lagos were thrown into mourning over the death of their breadwinner, Kolawole Animashaun who had just relocated from London to Nigeria.

After living in London for most part of his life and raising a family, the late 53-year-old Kolawole decided it was time to return home. Not sure what to expect, he returned with only one of his daughters, leaving his wife and other children back in London.

For a while, things appeared to be going on well for Kolawole as he gradually gained ground in a business venture. Within two years of his return, he was also able to buy a good property in Surulere. With everything going well, Kolawole was contemplating bringing back his entire family from London when the unexpected happened.

### Daughter recounts ordeal

Kolawole's daughter, Lola Animashaun who was with him until he was kidnapped, told *Encounter* that on Sunday, July 30, 2016, her father left their Ikoro home for Surulere with one of his uncles who was sick. By the evening of that day, Lola said his father called to say that he was not returning home. Lola noted that she heard a strange voice in the background during their conversation but didn't read much meaning to it.

"During the call, I heard a strange laugh at the background. It was a strange and wicked kind of laughter. Immediately, I heard my father say, 'what do you people mean,' then he said to me, 'I will call you back,' and ended the call," she narrated.

Lola said she got worried when her father didn't call back as he promised. "When he didn't call

back, I called him but his phone was switched off. At night, I tried his number but it wasn't going. I called my uncle whom he had gone to drop and he said that my father had left his house."

### Chat with kidnappers

Unknown to Lola that her father had been kidnapped and his phone seized, she began to chat with the kidnappers believing that she was chatting her father.

"I started chatting with my father's kidnappers in the middle of the night thinking I was chatting with my father. They replied my chat and told me that he was fine that he went to Aguda to see a friend. On the second day, I called his line but he wasn't responding. I told him to pick his call that he should no longer chat with me and that I was becoming scared. He replied and said he can't call and that he was very busy."

### Strange requests

Lola said she got suspicious of the chat with her father when he started asking for his own personal information.

"The person on the other end started asking for vital information of my dad like his account number and I was like 'of course you know you had locked your door and the key to your room is with you, so how do you expect me to open the door?' At that point, I told him to pick his call but he still refused. It finally dawned on me then that my father had been kidnapped and that I was chatting with his kidnappers."

### Emotional torment

Continuing her narrative, Lola said she reported that matter to the Police who advised her to continue communicating with the kidnappers while they proceed with their investigation.

"After we reported the matter to the Police, the kidnappers were always sending me scary pictures. Though I was scared for my life but the Police advised that I should continue communicating with them."

"One of them always told me that he was going to pluck out my father's eyes and give it to the vultures. He also threatened that he was going to butcher my father and that after he was done with him, he will come after me."

"He tormented me emotionally. He always said that I am a wicked and heartless child that I

don't want to sell my father's property and send him the money."

"I told him that the money is not the problem but that he should just let me hear my father's voice to know that he is fine. But on and on he was just playing with our intelligence."

### N5m ransom

"At first, they demanded N5 million ransom but later reduced it to N2 million. When we couldn't raise the money, they said we should send N100,000 for my father's drugs which we did. I also sent them another N100,000 for recharge card. After that, they told me to sell all my father's property and send them the money."

"I told them that I wasn't going to sell anything because it appears that my father has been killed. He told me he was coming after me to show me my father's corpse and I told him to come because I was already lost and tired. I deleted my whatsapp because it was our means of communication. I told police I could no longer continue with the chat."

"I was always living in fear, going from church to mosque. I also spent money consulting native doctors all to no avail."

He told me to get my dad's drug else he was going to let him die. We sent N10,000 for his drug. After then, we sent him another N100,000 to let him know that we will give him money if he allows us to just hear from my father."

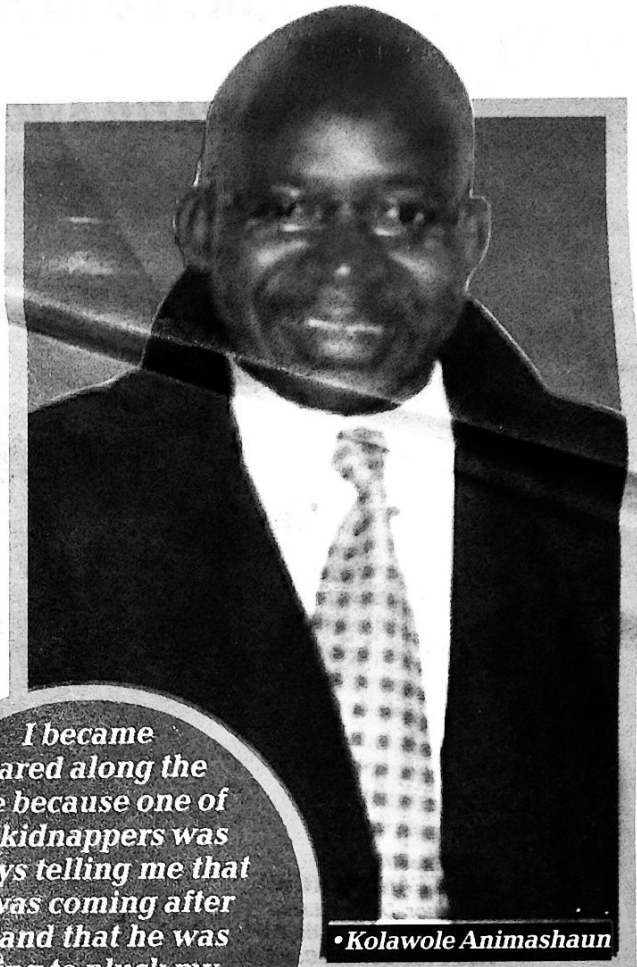
One of the kidnappers kept calling different contacts on my father's phone, telling them different stories. Although I made a payment to my father's account number, but unfortunately for him, he forwarded his own account number to one of my dad's friends."

When we noticed that the Police investigation was not yielding any positive response after we spent a lot of money, one of my aunts asked me to write a petition to DSS office located at Magodo, Lagos."

I wrote the petition, gave them all the necessary information, and they promised to call me back. I was always checking up on them and they promised that they were almost done with their investigation. I became scared along the line because the kidnapper was always telling me that he was coming after me and that he was going to pluck my eyes and my father's eyes and give to vultures to eat. He said he was going to kill him because I was not ready to drop money."

### DSS intervenes

After months of frustration and empty promises by the Police, Lola said she took the matter to the Department of State Services, DSS, Shangisha Lagos which took over the investigation and within



• Kolawole Animashaun

*I became scared along the line because one of the kidnappers was always telling me that he was coming after me and that he was going to pluck my eyes and my father's eyes and give to vultures to eat*

one month, arrested the kidnappers.

"Around November 24, 2016, I got a call from DSS office and they told me to come to their office and I went with one of my dad's friends. It was then they told us that they had clue on what happened, showed us his phones, ATM cards picture of his car and a picture on how they exhumed his corpse from a soak-away pit where he was buried after he was killed."

"His body had completely decomposed. We then went to the morgue the next day to identify his corpse properly. The only thing left was his golden tooth that was yet to decay."

### Masterminds arrested, arraigned

In 2017, the two masterminds behind Kolawole's kidnap, Bode Fabiyi and Afeez Ahmed, were arraigned before the Lagos High Court, sitting in Tafawa Balewa Square, TBS, Lagos.

The Lagos State prosecution led by Mrs. Adeshina Adekunle-Bello and Mrs. Titilayo Olanrewaju-Daud, told the court that the defendants conspired amongst themselves to kill the victim, Kolawole Animashaun.

"She said that the duo, after kidnapping Animashaun, blindfolded him, tied him up and gagged his mouth before strangling him to death. The prosecution also told the court that they broke the head

of the deceased with a big sledge hammer before strangling him to death and dumped his corpse in a soakaway pit."

Olanrewaju-Daud further told the court that Bode Fabiyi and Afeez Ahmed, also sold the deceased's car and still demanded for ransom from his family.

### Death sentence

After five years of trial, Justice Modupe Nico-Clay sentenced the defendants to death by hanging for kidnapping and killing Kolawole.

The judge also sentenced them to 77 years imprisonment after finding them guilty of the offence of conspiracy to murder, kidnapping, murder, collecting of ransom and dumping of corpse in a soakaway pit.

She further sentenced them to 14 years imprisonment for the first count and sentenced them to death on the second count charge and 21 years each for counts 3, 4 and 5 respectively.

Justice Nico-Clay stated that the prosecution has been able to prove its case beyond reasonable doubt that the convicts committed the offence.

The judge held that the offence of conspiracy to commit murder and kidnapping has been established. "That the deceased died, that it was the defendant that caused the death of the deceased."

### Consolation

Speaking with *Encounter* immediately after the judgment, Lola said: "The judgment is fair enough but it is not going to bring my father back neither is it going to take off this scary moment from my thoughts. But at least, we had justice for his lovely soul."