

# Soldiers deployed for Ekiti election said ‘sorry’ after killing my nephew, bricklayer – OPC leader, Aluko

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By Abiodun Nejo

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*Leader of Oodua Peoples Congress, Ekiti State, Chief Ogunyemi Aluko, tells **ABIODUN NEJO** about the alleged killing of two persons, including his nephew, Gbenga Balogun, by soldiers deployed to forestall the disruption of the recent Ekiti State governorship election*

***What circumstances led to the death of your nephew, Gbenga Balogun?***

It all began on Saturday, June 11. Gbenga was a member of the All Progressives Congress. We were passing through the Oye-Isan Road on our way to a campaign rally in the Ilejemeje Local Government Area (of Ekiti State). A branded campaign truck for the APC governorship candidate, which was conveying women in the campaign train, ran out of fuel and had to park. It was along the line that members of the opposition Social Democratic Party attacked the women in the truck. The women had to escape for their lives by fleeing into the bush. We were already at Isan Ekiti then, so they had to call to inform us. At that juncture, some people went back to rescue the women. Some police personnel even went there for the rescue, but before members of the rescue team could get out of the vehicle for the rescue mission, the SDP members opened fire on them. Five persons were injured, so, they had to rush them to hospital, but before getting to hospital, one of them had died. But surprisingly, before we got to Ado Ekiti, they had published it on the social media that we were the ones that attacked SDP supporters.

***Was Gbenga among those shot?***

No. He was not even among those who went for the rescue mission. His matter happened on the following day, Sunday, June 12. Following the misinformation of Saturday, we agreed that we should meet at Old Garage, Ado Ekiti on Sunday to embark on a peaceful rally so that people would know that we were peaceful and that we were not the ones that attacked SDP members, but rather, that it was SDP members that attacked APC members. Transporters, including their leaders, were there that morning because the deceased and the four other injured were all members of Road Transport Employers Association of Nigeria. So, everybody, including members of other transport unions, such as tricycle and okada operators, were there. Gbenga was not even there at that point. Gbenga's wife told me that he was sleeping at home when somebody called him; it was in response to the call that he walked into the unfortunate fatal situation.

That time, we had blocked the road for the peaceful rally. The police and men of the Department of State Services came there and could ascertain it was a peaceful rally. But men of the Nigerian Army came in their truck; when they got there, we reacted to the way they behaved, saying they were supposed to first ask what was happening. It was in the process that one of them got down from the truck and fired a shot. The bullet hit Gbenga's stomach, pierced it and hit the person standing behind him. Gbenga had not even got to the scene of the protest; he was just on the road leading to the palace and the bullet hit him there.

***What efforts were made to save his life?***

The worst thing was that when people wanted to rescue him by attempting to take him to hospital with a mini bus, one of the soldiers turned off the car engine and they took him in their truck. Instead of taking him to the hospital in view of the blood gushing out of his body, they drove towards Ajilosun. I didn’t even know that it was my nephew that was hit. It was at that point that I was informed that Gbenga was the affected person. I didn’t believe it could be true because I was already leaving, not even knowing he was there. So, when they insisted he was the one, I rushed to Ekiti State University Teaching Hospital, Ado Ekiti, but there was no trace of him there. So I had to make phone calls to relevant people who I thought could reach out to the soldiers. It was after then that they brought him to EKSUTH in a pool of his blood. He was in great pains at that time, having lost so much blood. It was the soldier that fired the shot and some others that brought him there. On getting there, they took the said soldier away while some military men came to the hospital in other vehicles.

***What did the soldiers do at the hospital?***

I think they were there basically to stay with us. We were together at EKSUTH Emergency Ward. However, I seized the opportunity to tell the military men that it was not expected of them to be inflicting pains or killing innocent people who were even serving the society. Then, election was still six days away, the soldiers drafted to the state were for peace and that they should not be the ones killing people. When the soldiers realised that their victim had died, they said, ‘Sorry and left’. The second gunshot victim, identified as Jimoh, a bricklayer, died as well despite the surgery carried out on him. We bought blood and drugs to save the lives of the two victims, but they died. It is sad.

***How did the family receive the news of his death?***

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His father has died, but the mother is alive. His mother is in deep sorrow as we speak. The father was a native of Odo Owa Ilofa in Kwara State and that was where I took Gbenga’s body to for burial. I must confess, the people of that town are in great sorrow. For instance, there is an elderly man who said it was Gbenga that facilitated his return to the hometown after years of sojourn outside. The people were full of positive comments about Gbenga’s goodness and generosity to them.

***What was his occupation?***

He was a carpenter and also worked as a night (security) guard. He was 42 years old. He has two wives, but one died recently. He has seven children – one from one wife and six from the other.

He was a hard-working young man. He believed in justice, he could not stomach cheating and was always ready to ensure fairness. He was jovial, people loved him wherever he went and he was popular for being sociable.

***How has life been for the immediate family since his demise?***

He was the breadwinner of the family. Since his death, we have been struggling with the little we get to aid his family. Life has been difficult for the family because for now, his wife cannot go out yet; she is still mourning according to tradition. Things have been difficult. That is why I am appealing to the Ekiti State Governor, Dr Kayode Fayemi, to help his family. His children are young. I also plead with the wife of the Ekiti State Governor, Bisi Fayemi, and the Ekiti State governor-elect, Biodun Oyebanji, to consider the plight of Gbenga’s family and come to their aid. Gbenga’s eldest child is in the university while the youngest is four years old. We seek the support of government so that the education of the children will not come to an abrupt end. It is only God and government that we see as capable of helping us.

***Did Gbenga tell you about some of his plans?***

He belonged to the factional group of Oodua People's Congress. His plan for that day was that all the members of his group would merge with my group of OPC since I was his uncle. But basically, he left home that morning so that he could see the man that had called him on phone. That was why he came to that place.

***What do you think should be done about the trigger-happy soldier that killed him?***

My belief is that some of our military and security personnel have been compromised; if not, how can somebody on a peace mission turn out to be a killer when there was no provocation? If the soldiers were really out to do what they were sent to do when election was still six days away, when there was no riot or disturbance, were they supposed to start shooting to the extent of wasting two lives? My plea with the Federal Government and its state counterpart, in order to prevent repeat of situations like this, is to fish out the soldier that fired the shot and killed the two persons. He should be fished out and made to face justice. There should be no cover-up in the matter. The government should not allow these two gentlemen to die in vain. The said soldier had caused lifetime pains in the lives of the families of the two persons.