

How police killed 75-year-old Ilorin Mogaji, labelled him kidnapper – Daughter

Wife and daughter of the late Mogaji Soliu Abdulsalami of the Araoyo family of Omoda community, Ilorin, Kwara State, Funmi Soliu-Abdulsalami, and Taiwo, narrate to **EMMANUEL OJO** how the police allegedly killed Mogaji and falsely tagged him a kidnapper



•Daughter



•Widow



•The late Abdulsalami

Can you briefly introduce yourself?
My name is Funmilayo Soliu-Abdulsalami. I am the wife of the late Mogaji Soliu Abdulsalami.

What is the situation around the death of your husband?

They want to oppress us. On Tuesday, September 13, 2022, my husband went to the Government House to see the governor as the governor requested a meeting with all the Mogajis. After the meeting, he left. He informed us about his movement; he always did that. After the meeting, he left to see his friend, Mogaji Alaase, who owns a block industry somewhere along the expressway. I was not around on that day, as I made a trip to Lagos.

He then told his friend that he would be leaving because his wife was not at home. Then, his friend requested that my husband should give his three children a ride home.

My husband and one of the children that sat in the front were killed. I see this as total oppression. They used the powers they have to oppress us (sobs). They just want to drag his name in the mud and spoil his reputation (sobs). Please continue with my daughter (sobs)....

Okay then. Please introduce yourself.
My name is Taiwo Mogaji. I am the daughter of the late Mogaji Soliu-Abdulsalami.

What really happened?

On that day, my dad visited his friend's block industry after their meeting at the State House, just like my mum said. They were offered meat pie and drinks at the governor's place as refreshment and the governor also gave them some money to share among themselves.

I had gone there with him on several occasions too and my dad never kept secrets from us.

It was shocking to hear about his death because we didn't see it coming. Our dad never really kept late nights out, so, we were surprised to realise that at 11pm, dad wasn't home yet. Our mum not being at home made us not to realise this on time because most of us are married and we don't live with them anymore.

On the morning of Wednesday, September 14, 2022, our attention was drawn to what was posted online by the police, alleging that our dad was a kidnapper. This was posted on the internet by the Police Public Relations Officer in Kwara State, Okasanmi Ajayi, alleging that the police killed two kidnappers and two ran away. That was what he posted. He said that

it was four bandits/kidnappers, two were killed and two escaped into the jungle. The children of his friend (Alaase) that escaped would later narrate their ordeal and explain all that happened. Our dad was said to have left the block industry at about 9pm that day with the three boys.

According to the boys, they noticed that a car was trailing them and when they drew the attention of my dad to it, he told them that the car might just be going its way, not really trailing them until the car suddenly overtook and intercepted them.

At that point, my dad engaged the reverse gear quickly but he ran into a heap of sand. My dad was always driving with just one hand; he started driving like that after he suffered a paralysis in his left hand about 34 years ago. I'm quite sure that if it were not for the paralysis on his other arm, he wouldn't have died the way he did because he was a very good driver.

After hitting the heap of sand, he came down of the car to ask what the matter was and that was how the assailants shot him with local bullets on his chest. It was surprising that the police said what they said.

Did the police take responsibility for killing?

The PPRO, Okasanmi Ajayi, posted on the internet that two kidnappers/bandits were killed by the Kwara State police officers. They (the police) said they killed him, alleging that he was a kidnapper. His body was riddled with pellets that spread around his chest and abdomen. After shooting him, a cutlass was also used on his neck. The children that were there did explain all that.

According to what we heard, the community where our dad died is in a land dispute with my dad's friend, Alaase. My dad wasn't involved in any land dispute because we didn't even have any land to sell. Even when Alaase went to the

police station in the community where my dad was killed, we were told that the community members chased him with stones and sticks, so, he couldn't do anything. Eventually, they took the case to the Commissioner of Police and that was how the case went.

What about your dad's corpse?

The corpse was taken to the mortuary by the DPO in that community but there is something I would like to point out. There was an earlier case of kidnap two weeks before the incident that led to the demise of my dad. The kidnap involved the wife and child of an APC candidate vying for the state House of Assembly in Kwara State. The woman and her son were invited by the police for identity check to confirm if my dad and the other boys were the perpetrator of the act. The police showed the woman the picture of my dad and those of the two boys that survived but the woman said that they were not the kidnappers. She added that she had never seen their faces before. She said the perpetrators were Hausa.

How old was your dad?

He was 75 years old. He wasn't really young, just that he had a good stature and he didn't like troubles; he was an easygoing person.

In the process of killing my dad, the boy that sat at the seat behind my dad was the oldest among the boys. He was wise enough to sneak out of the car and find his way into the gutter. That was how he escaped. The one that sat in front was also killed. They took him to their car and shot him.

What about the fourth person?

He said he was able to escape because he was wearing a 'jalamia' (night gown) which slipped off the hands of the gunmen when they attempted to grab him. He said, in an attempt to run away, they hit him on his head with the butt of a gun but he was eventually able to escape.

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So what then happened to your dad's corpse that was taken to the mortuary by the police?

They took him to the general hospital but eventually, they released the corpse to us on Friday.

Why did the release of the corpse take that long?

They kept telling us to come the next day and the day after just because we had nobody. That's what I can say. We are helpless.

Do they still maintain that your dad was a kidnapper?

Yes, but at the moment, they are not talking about our dad anymore. They took the case to the Commissioner of Police and he said that the police should provide those that killed my dad. They brought two men, whom they said were the ones that killed my dad but the two boys that were with my dad said the men they brought were not the culprits. They said the headlamps of the car were on when the incident took place and they saw the faces of the men that killed my dad and the boy that sat next to him in front. They are the eyewitnesses of the incident.

But on the morning of Wednesday, after my dad was killed, the police took credit for it because it was posted on the Internet by the PPRO. Then, they went ahead to bring other people; but again, those boys said the second set of people were also not the people who killed dad. Even the youngest of the boys confirmed that the people that were brought to the Commissioner of Police were not those who killed my dad.

Did the boys give the description of the killers?

They said that they weren't in police uniform.

How many were the killers?

They were three, according to the boys.

What's the police stance on the case at the moment?

Now, the surprising thing about the matter for me is that after all of that, the police asked Mogaji Alaase (my dad's friend) and the two other boys that are witnesses to take the matter to court. As we speak, Mogaji Alaase and the two surviving boys are in Kwara State Prison. They were taken to the prison and the Commissioner of Police said that the matter should be charged to court. We actually thought that we would get true justice. That was the reason we raised the matter, not because we wanted to make any case. Even one of the boys that was taken to prison is a minor. He is not up to 18 years and since then, he has been crying everyday that they lied against him.

How old are the boys?

The one that was killed was 15 years old and he is the grandson of Alaase (my dad's friend). One of the two boys put in detention is between the age range of 14 and 15. The second of the two boys in detention is above 18. He is older and wiser than the others. That was what happened. They (police) have refused to accept that they made any mistake. They killed dad and lied against him. They kept twisting the matter from left to right.

Apart from all that, what other efforts have you made?

Well, we've been crying out to see who will help us out but people have rather told us to accept our fate.

How do you feel about the whole incident?

What I feel is that we are not safe as Nigerian citizens. All we want is justice. We all know that our dad is not the kind of person they said he is. They should correct the impression they gave about our dad and let people know that he was not a kidnapper. They should take away the lie they made against our dad. They should come on air to declare the truth and let people know that he was not what they labelled him.

As his daughter, I know virtually everything about him. Our dad didn't keep secrets. He told us everything about himself. He was close to us.

What was his occupation?

He was a transporter before he became Mogaji since about 12 years ago.

Who is Mogaji?

Mogaji is like someone that is next to the king; someone that can be referred to as "baale" but in Ilorin we refer to them as mogaji. He was the head of the community. This is something that has really saddened me and the entire family.