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Police killed my husband for rejecting special duty — Wife of Kwara inspector

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The atmosphere was pensive as seated family members and friends of Inspector Taiye Atobiloye sobbed quietly.

The sombre air was punctuated anytime a new visitor rushed in, asked if the news was true and burst into searing tears.

Curling up in a corner of the two-bedroom apartment was Taiye's wife, Oluwabukola, a teacher in a public school in Kwara State. She looked dishevelled and shattered.

After four stillbirths, her hope of being a mother after 12 years of marriage had just ended.

The bereaved woman kept wondering how her police husband died after seven days of being held incommunicado in a police cell in Lokoja.

"How could the police do this to one of their own?" she asked rhetorically.

"I want the world to know what they did to my husband. They collected a lot of money from him and tortured him to death," she wailed.

The deployment

Inspector Taiye, with force number 232980, was attached to the Oke Onigbin Police Division, Kwara State, after 22 years in the police force.

During a meeting at the division early April 2023, the Divisional Police Officer, Stephen Aigbogun, reportedly announced that a particular inspector would be deployed on special duty to Zone 8 Police Command, Lokoja, Kogi State.

The deceased's wife alleged that the affected inspector, however, found a way to dodge the assignment and her husband was picked as a replacement.

According to her, the development created a sharp discord in the division, as 47-year-old Taiye rejected the deployment.

However, a senior officer reportedly prevailed on the Ikosi, Kwara State indigene, to go and wait at Ilorin while he pleaded on his behalf with the divisional officer.

"My husband went to Ilorin on Tuesday, April 3, as the officer promised to call my husband the next day.

"But throughout that day, he did not. My husband called him on Wednesday night and he said a signal had been sent for my husband to report to Lokoja.

"My husband said he could not just like that as a family man and that he would need to raise money for his transportation and accommodation. He promised to go the following Monday.

"But from Good Friday, the police started calling him from Lokoja and asking where he was," she added.

According to her, after getting enough money, Taiye travelled to Lokoja on Easter Monday with some medical papers indicating that he was not fit for the special assignment.

Saturday PUNCH gathered that in 2019, the inspector was involved in an accident while going for night duty.

His leg was said to have been crushed by a motorcycle. At the time, he was hospitalised and underwent treatment after a series of X-rays at the University of Ilorin Teaching Hospital.

Oluwabukola said her husband went to Lokoja with copies of his medical reports to appeal for a reversal of the deployment.

An Assistant Area Commander was said to have expressed shock at the posting of the inspector and promised to send another signal for him to return to Kwara.

According to the wife, Taiye was made to part with some funds to make the signal quicker.

"The assistant area commander assured him that the new signal was already being typed. He (the assistant area commander) said he was going to eat and my husband should not yet report.

"Before the man would return, he and the DPO at Oke Onigbin had spoken and reached another agreement. "Because my husband had spent a lot of money, some of which he borrowed from me, without getting the letter, he left Lokoja on Thursday, April 13.

"When he returned, I asked why he did not stay and he said his spirit was troubled and that was why he returned home. I told him to go back since he did not have any other job and his uniform was still there. He promised to return next Tuesday," she added.

Oluwabukola said by Monday, the Oke Onigbin Divisional Traffic Officer called her and demanded



• Inspector Taiye with wife, Oluwabukola



• Inspector General of Police, Usman Baba

her husband's whereabouts and why he had yet to report for the special assignment.

She said Taiye took the phone from her and promised to return to Lokoja the following day.

The detention

"When my husband got to Lokoja the following morning, he called me and said he was asked to go to 'D' Police Division and that he would be detained there for absence from duty without permission.

"He also called me and said he was behind the counter with other policemen on duty. He said he would be put in a cell and I should not bother because it was normal police procedure, but by the following day, he would be released.

"By 8pm that night, I called him, but nobody picked up the call. Throughout that day, the phone rang out. The following morning, I called him more than 20 times but nobody picked up the phone.

"On the third day, I did the same thing and nobody picked. I became afraid and called his brother in Lagos to inform him," she added.

Taiye's brother was said to have spoken with the Oke Onigbin DPO, who also wondered why the inspector's phone was collected from him.

Oluwabukola said on the fourth day when she tried her husband's phone, it was switched off.

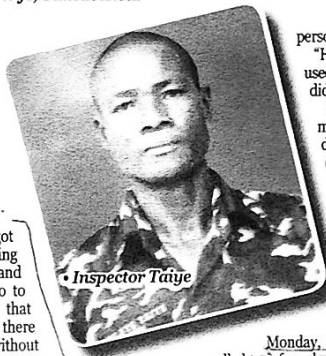
However, while she was in church on Sunday, one of her husband's friends in Ilorin called her phone.

"I did not pick up the call because we were still in service. I saw the message he sent after the service that my husband was in critical condition.

"I called the man and he said I had to come to the hospital that my husband was sick and that he had messed up the cell where he was held.

"I told the man that he was only a family friend and why was he the one they called and not me or another family member?"

"I asked the man to give me the phone number of the



• Inspector Taiye

person who gave him the information.

"He said my husband's phone was used to make the call and that the caller didn't give his name," she added.

She said she alerted family members of her husband to the development, adding that the deceased's brother called the Oke Onigbin DPO on the phone, but he didn't take his call.

Oluwabukola said when she called her husband's phone number again, nobody picked up the call for two days.

The death

However, around 4pm on Monday, April 24, she said Taiye's brother called to inform her that her husband had died in the cell.

"He said the DPO of Oke-Onigbin called him. I told him that there was no way my husband would be dead because I had been calling his phone and no one picked.

"Immediately, I called his number again and someone, who identified himself as Inspector Musa or Isa picked up the call. I asked him why he was with my husband's phone for seven days and he should return the phone to him.

"He then switched off the phone. I called the DPO of Oke-Onigbin and requested to speak with the DPO. I asked the DPO where he sent my husband to and what he had done to my husband. He said I should not tell him that rubbish. He said my husband went on duty and cut off the call," she added.

Saturday PUNCH gathered that the matter was reported to the office of the Kwara State Commissioner of Police, who promised to get to the root of the matter and ensure justice was served.

Oluwabukola, while demanding justice, lamented the manner in which her husband died despite being a policeman.

"Aside from the accident that he had that broke his leg, my husband was not sick. Maybe he was poisoned or the cell was sprayed with chemicals.

"I want the world to know what they did to my husband. They collected a lot of money from him and tortured him to death," she added.

The bereaved teacher described her husband as gentle and loving, saying she had advised him to quit the police work, but he asked for three more years.

"We were married for 12 years. By this time of the day (12 noon), he would have called me about six or eight times to ask after my welfare. He was a very cheerful man.

"Around the time he had the accident that affected his leg, I also had a minor one that affected my hand and that hindered my ability to wash clothes. Because of that, he only allowed me to cook while he washed the clothes; he spread and ironed them and cleaned the house.

"They took him from me just like that. We have had stillbirths more than four times. And now, they are asking me to come and pick his corpse as if he was an animal," she stated.

Oluwabukola's elder sister, Folashade Alase, who was among

the visitors, wondered why the police would cut off communication between the inspector and his family.

"Now that he is dead, they are asking us to come and pick up his corpse," she stated.

A source told Saturday PUNCH that the victim was soiling his body while in the cell and the police abandoned him till he died.

"The 'D' Division DPO, Lokoja, Adigun Salami, must explain what happened to him in the cell. I was told he defecated until he died without getting medical help. We want to know who gave the order that he should be left in the cell," the source added.

The defence

The Kwara State Public Relations Officer, Okeanmi Ajayi, said the command was pained that the policeman died.

He said, "The inspector was serving in Kwara, but the incident happened when he was deployed in Lokoja, the zonal headquarters, for a special duty of one month. The moment he was posted and he reported there, he was responsible to them and they were responsible to him. We still don't know the full details of what transpired. We are awaiting the details from the zonal command, where an investigation is ongoing."

The Zone 8 Police Public Relations Officer, Ruth Awi, said the inspector was a drunk, adding that he was detained after he fell into the gutter.

She said the Assistant Inspector General of Police in charge of the zone had ordered that an autopsy be conducted to determine the cause of his death.

Awi said, "He died in a hospital, though when he was detained, he fell sick. He was confirmed dead in the hospital. His corpse has been deposited in a mortuary."

Asked to respond to allegations of the officer being held incommunicado, she said, "Zone 8 is a zonal headquarters; officers come from Kogi and Kwara commands for quick intervention duties. This man, apparently a drunk, was picked up from the gutter where he fell on the day he was detained. So, whether it was in the process of falling that his phone fell, nobody knows."

She insisted that detention was part of police punishment and nobody seized the officer's phone.

The zonal police spokesperson described reports on the matter on social media as mere speculation.

On the allegation that money was collected from the cop, Awi wondered where he would get money as an inspector.

"This man, does he have money? Their coming to the zone is not usually for more than three weeks or one month before they return to their commands."

"He was detained in 'D' Division and when they noticed he was behaving funny, he was taken to the police clinic and from there, he was referred to the Federal Medical Centre, where he was confirmed dead. He could not have been left (in the cell); he was one of us," she added.

How could the police do this to one of their own? I want the world to know what they did to my husband. They collected a lot of money from him and tortured him to