

How UNILAG final year student drowned in Lagos beach – Student

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Balogun. Photo: NANS

By Uthman Salami

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Contrary to online claims that a University of Lagos student drowned while attempting a backflip, PUNCH Metro gathered that the deceased, Damilola Balogun, a 400-level student of the Department of Education, was swept away by ocean currents at a beach in Ibeju-Lekki.

Balogun, who was supposed to begin his teaching practice on Monday, was also the president-elect of the Nigerian Universities Education Students Association, UNILAG chapter.

Our correspondent learnt that Balogun had gone to the beach in the Idado community with other executive members for a handover get-together.

PUNCH Metro findings revealed that he was in the company of the outgoing executive members, the General Secretary, and a few colleagues when the tragedy struck on Thursday.

A close source of the deceased, who witnessed the incident but declined to identify his name, said Balogun ignored warnings to stay away from the rising ocean current.

The source explained, “What happened was that the current president-elect and other members went for a get-together with the immediate past executive members.

“The new president-elect had served as vice president in the outgoing administration, so he joined them for the handover party.

“They went to Akodo in Idado, where they spent the night. By Thursday afternoon, only the president-elect, the general secretary, and the outgoing vice president were still around.

“Around 2pm, after playing football, Balogun went towards the shoreline and asked the General Secretary to take pictures and videos of him.

“The General Secretary warned him that the ocean current was too strong, but Balogun insisted he wanted to ‘enjoy the village life’ a little longer.

“At some point, the General Secretary left him at the shoreline because he could no longer withstand the waves.

“He only noticed from afar when locals began shouting that the president-elect was waving for help inside the water.”

The source added that attempts by local divers to rescue him failed as strong currents pulled him under.

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His body, PUNCH Metro learnt, was eventually discovered two days later at the Museyo community, opposite the spot where he drowned.

“The incident happened on Thursday. By Saturday morning, the Baale of the community alerted us that a body had been found at the shoreline. We confirmed it was him. He was buried that same evening in Museyo,” the source said.

A video of less than 40 seconds of an eyewitness account, sighted by PUNCH Metro on Monday, corroborated the source’s account.

Meanwhile, the Lagos State chapter of the National Association of Nigerian Students, Joint Campus Council, described Balogun as “a beacon of hope, an embodiment of courage, and a steadfast advocate for the rights and welfare of students.”

In the statement, which was jointly signed by its chairman and spokesperson, Abdul-Raheem Abdul-Quadri and Ridwan Ajayi, the association noted, “He was a brave, strong, and dogged comrade, a shining light in the Lagos State student movement.

“He embodied resilience, dedication, and a genuine passion for service. He was a happy soul, a star with dreams as bright as dawn, and a leader committed to advancing the welfare and aspirations of Nigerian students.

“His life was marked by an uncommon dedication to service, a cheerful spirit, and a resolve that inspired everyone privileged to know him.

“In the prime of his journey, fate dealt us a devastating blow when the ocean claimed him. Yet even in his final moments, he remained who he had always been — a fighter.”

When contacted on Monday, UNILAG spokesperson Adejoke Alaga-Ibraheem declined to speak over the telephone, instead requesting that a text message be sent.

However, as of press time on Monday, she had yet to respond to the message sent by our correspondent.

This is not the first time Lagos has witnessed such a tragedy involving students.

In 2022, four teenagers drowned at Elegushi Beach, Lekki, after going swimming to celebrate the completion of their West African Senior School Certificate Examination.

The victims were among 10 secondary school leavers, aged between 14 and 15, who had gone to the beach for the outing when the incident occurred.