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## Haunted Mpape

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### Abuja community familiar with police extra judicial killings

By GODWIN TSA

Residents of Mpape, a satellite town of Abuja, are fast becoming an endangered species in the hands of trigger-policemen who kill them at will. The trend, which did not start today is becoming worse by the day. Remember the gruesome killing of a pregnant woman, Doris Okere, a staff of Bank PHB by a mobile policeman attached to Zenith Bank at Mpape.

Already, this year recorded it's first casualty when on Saturday January 9, a 32-year-old father was gunned down right in front of his compound by a notorious police officer identified as Inspector Akin popularly known as "Man of God" (what an irony?)

Allegations by the residents say that the policeman involved in the killing had been in such incidents in the past where he was linked with extra judicial killings in the area but never got punished

The victim of the recent incident, Segun Oluwasomi, a plumber was said to have knelt down with his hands up in surrender, pleading with his killer to arrest him if he had committed any offence rather than to take his life and leave his young family without a father. His plea fell on deaf ears as his assailant, baying for his blood allegedly shot him with his service pistol in the stomach at close range.

#### Youths insist on justice

When *Abuja Metro* visited the scene of the crime located at the Katampe axis of the town, nobody could fathom any reason for the murder of the deceased as everybody who spoke on the issue described him as a man of peace who was not involved in any act of criminality.

Indeed, his peaceful nature and acts of benevolence earned him the name "Ogume" which means a jovial and peaceful man.

No wonder, the incident triggered serious protest by youths in the area who are demanding that only the arrest and prosecution of the police assailant could appease them.

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The youths are angry particularly because the perpetrator of the alleged crime who is popular and dreaded in the town has allegedly committed similar offences in the past and got away with them.

Eyewitnesses who confided in Abuja Metro but refusing to be named for security reasons said the victim, was working at a site close to his compound and decided to come home to refresh when the incident occurred.

“Ogume was working in a site very close by (pointing to a bush path) when he came out to have some rest. I saw him and we greeted. I even overheard him telling the girl selling orange that he had not eaten since morning and collected an orange from her and was heading home.

“Suddenly, the Inspector (man of God) arrived on a bike with his colleague, a Corporal. They alighted from the bike and started running after Ogume firing at him. He ran to his compound, dodging the bullets but not too long as the other police officer allegedly blocked his way.

“It was at this point that Ogume knelt down with his hands in surrender begging that they should arrest him if he indeed committed any crime. But the Inspector pointed his pistol at his stomach and shot him at close range leaving him in his pool of blood and threatened to shoot whoever tries to rescue him.

Most people, particularly the youths who spoke on the matter narrated the same story as they could not explain the circumstances of the killing.

**Stalked man**

However, another resident told *Abuja Metro* that the slain plumber had complained to him and other close friends bitterly that someone was after his life just because he dug a borehole for another resident and it is affecting his water business.

Although this allegation was not confirmed, Abuja Metro learnt that some residents were prevented from returning to their places of abode by some angry youths who accused them of having a hand in the murder of their colleagues.

It took the intervention of the DPO and another respected member of the community before they were allowed into their homes.

It was further gathered that the killer cop and his colleague had ran to the home of a serving security personnel to help them cover up the case, but he refused to cooperate with them.

After the trigger happy cops left the scene thinking that their victim was dead; some good neighbours took him to the Wuse General Hospital from where he was given first aid treatment and further referred to the National Hospital.

At the National Hospital however, the victim, the only child of the family from Kaba in Kogi State died at about 5 pm of the same day leaving behind his wife, a nine-year-old son and an aged mother.

**It's true, say police**

Confirming the incident, the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) in charge of A Division Mpape, Mrs. A.B Garba who described it as unfortunate noted that the case had been transferred to the FCT command.

She declined further comments on the matter directing other inquiries on the matter to the Police Public Relations Officer.

Also confirming the incident, the Area Commander in charge of Maitama metropolitan, Mr. Alamutu Abiodun, an Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) said the police officer has been arrested and the case transferred to the Homicide Department.

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Since the heart breaking incident, residents of Mpape situated some four kilometres from the city centre are in pains and mourning mood, are yet to recover from the shock that came with the death of their beloved son.

Meanwhile, a niece of the deceased, Mrs. Helen Afeme has petitioned the Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Solomon Arase wherein she is demanding N5b as compensation for the breach of fundamental rights to life and for the upkeep of the family of the victim.

In the petition written by her lawyer, Tolu Babaleye, Mrs. Afeme is demanding for the immediate arrest and prosecution of the police officer for homicide.

The petitioner who slammed a seven-day ultimatum on the IGP to meet with her demands equally asked for comprehensive autopsy to be carried out and for the police to give the deceased befitting burial at his home in Kaba according to Christian rites.

The petition dated January 12 was equally served on various arms of the police, the National Human Rights Commission, the Public Complaint Commission and the Attorney General of the Federation.

In 2008, global human rights watchdog, Amnesty International (AI) released a report titled: Nigeria Police kill at will, which documented cases of torture and shooting of suspects in custody. The group said the police were notorious for shooting suspects, and torturing them to death.

AI said: "The Nigerian Police is responsible for hundreds of unlawful killings every year. Police don't only kill people by shooting them; they also torture them to death, often while they are in detention.

"The majority of the cases go uninvestigated and the police officers responsible go unpunished. The families of the victims usually get no justice or redress. Most never even found out what happened to their loved ones."

The situation seems to have worsened. Not only do the officers kill innocent citizens, they also shoot their colleagues.

### **Lawyers speak**

A former NBA president, Oluwarotimi Akeredolu (SAN) said the fact that other ranks in the police have become a threat is no news. According to him, their pastime has always been to turn their guns on taxpayers they are paid to protect and whose monies are used to procure the ammunition. He said officers need re-orientation.

"A lot of work needs to be done to make officers and men of the NPF appreciate their role as the people's police and not a police force. The word 'force' is certainly a misnomer in the present democratic dispensation.

"Periodic psychiatric test is only desirable for suspicious officers and men. But how well placed is the institution itself to detect derelicts among its rank? An important question. Officers and men who are at the brink of flipping to the other side sure need great assistance.

"Does the institution care for them? Are they well placed to do the needful in ensuring that they operate under minimum favorable conditions that will support stable mental disposition? These are posers to ponder on.

Akeredolu said where officers or other ranks run foul of the law, they should be properly indicted and tried. Their prosecution, he said, should not be left to the ordinary and usual police prosecutors, who are more likely to compromise.

"The Office of the Federal Attorney-General in collaboration with the Police Service Commission must set up a special prosecution unit to handle grave matters of this nature involving the police and the people. Proper prosecution and commensurate conviction would certainly deter future occurrence.

"Above all the Nigerian Police no doubt need full re-orientation from head to toe, starting from their recruitment criteria," he added.

For Dr. Joseph Nwobike (SAN), the reason for the incessant killing of civilians by armed officers and, lately, policemen is the direct consequence of impunity and the failure of professional value system within the police.

He said it is unfortunate that policemen, who by their training, ought to apply themselves and disposition towards the protection of lives and property now pose a risk and challenge to lives and property.

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