

Controversy trails death of trader in Ibadan community

• We await autopsy report –Police

By BROWN CHIMEZIE

Tension is building in Alaka area of Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State, over the murder of Emeka Ofoma, an Igbo trader at New Land Avenue, Alaka, a suburb of Ibadan. Ofoma who had a shop at 44, Awolowo Way, Oke-Bola, near former Independent Hotel, *Saturday Sun* gathered, met his untimely death on his way home on April 10, 2016, shortly after leaving a small get-together of neighbourhood landlords. They just celebrated with a neighbour, who had bought a new car.

Following the death of the 42-year old native of Enuama Ifite - Ezinifite in Aguata local government council, Anambra State, there had been tension over alleged shoddy investigations by the police and perceived attempt to assist some of those involved in the murder to escape justice. Described as gentle and peace-loving, the deceased had barely moved into his new house in the neighbourhood before his death. He allegedly received a machete cut on the head a few steps away from his house from one Smart Uche, 34, now in detention, on the orders of an influential man in the area, Yussuf (other names withheld) over removal of fowl dung dumped some metres away from his residence. He was rushed to Faith in God Medical Hospital, Elebu area and later to the University College Hospital (UCH) where he eventually passed on five days later after surgery. He left behind a daughter and a 14-month-old baby.

The murder was first reported at Kuola Police Station, as well as Apata Divisional Police Command, but later transferred to the Homicide Department of the State Criminal Investigations Department (C.I.D), Iyaganku. Narrating the tragedy, an eyewitness and member of New Land Avenue Landlords Association, (NLALA), who spoke on condition of anonym-

ity, told *Saturday Sun* that residents had woken up to find a dumped heap of fowl dungs in the neighbourhood that polluted the air anytime it drizzles. According to him, the landlords had severally laid siege to the area without luck until that Sunday, April 10, at 8 pm when Yussuf came in company with two boys with some bags of the fowl dung. It was revealed that they had successfully dumped the rubbish and were about to leave when the landlords noticed movements in the area and left their 'new car party' to meet them.

The eyewitness said that the landlords insisted that they evacuate the smelly fowl dung and that after a heated argument, they agreed. According to him, Chibuike Daniel, 18, an apprentice to the deceased, was instructed to hold a torchlight for them as the landlords went back to continue with their celebration. "However," he told the newspaper, "everyone had barely left venue of the celebration, including the deceased when Smart Uche and another simply identified as Ibrol in an unregistered blue colour Toyota Corolla car drove in towards the 'dump site'. Coincidentally, it was also when the deceased was walking home after the celebration. We did not know that they had attacked him until Daniel ran to inform us on our way home that Smart had given his boss a machete cut in the head and that the deceased was in serious distress. It was at that time that we rushed to the scene."

It was gathered that as the deceased was walking home, Yussuf snatched the torch from Daniel and pointed at him, telling Ibrol and Smart that he was among the landlords opposed to dumping the fowl dung in the area. Almost immediately, it was learnt, Yussuf rushed to the deceased and punched him on the mouth, leading to a huge cut. It was revealed that as he writhed in pains and blood

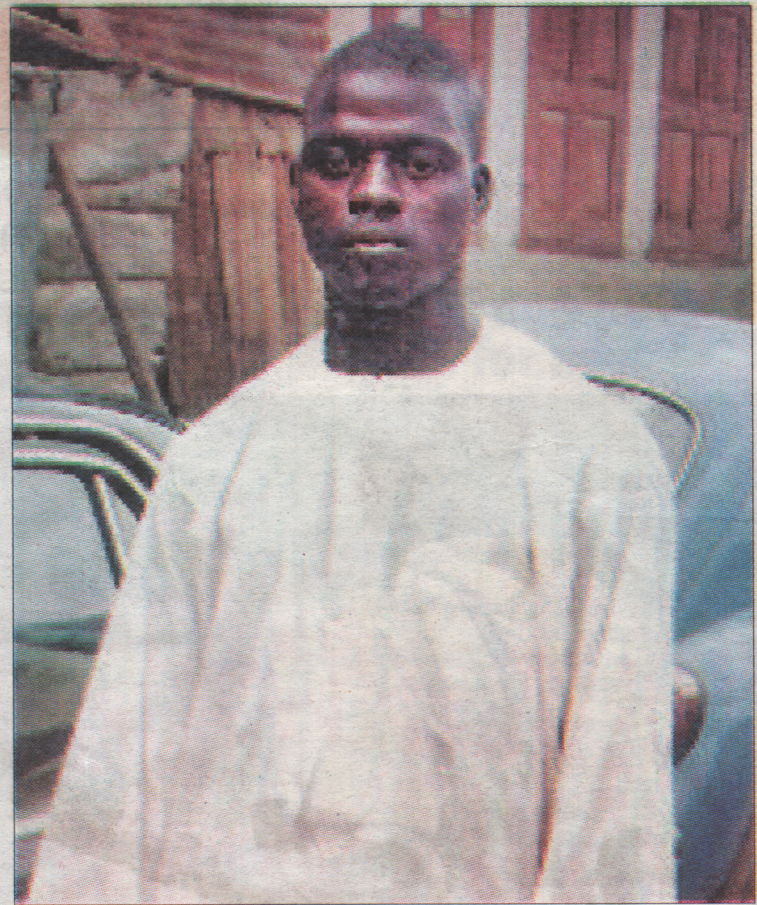
gushed out, Smart armed with a cutlass, gave him the machete cut and he slumped. Another source, who refused his name in print on security grounds, told *Saturday Sun* that one Lucky Pius and another simply identified as Daddy Ayo were the first to get to the scene of the crime. "Daddy Ayo was struggling with Smart to collect the cutlass from him, while Ibrol called out to them to assist him to put the deceased into one of the vehicles to take him to the hospital," the source said. He further revealed that after the deceased was put in the car, Ibrol attempted to escape with his unregistered Toyota Corolla car, but unfortunately, Daniel had already punctured the tyres.

When *Saturday Sun* met Pius at Awolowo Way, Ibadan, he was still in shock over the death of Ofoma, who he said was a good neighbour, ever ready to assist anyone in need. He told *Saturday Sun* that he was detained by the police and later released, wondering why those

involved in the crime were yet to be arrested by the police. In a petition written and signed by Barrister Sunday Ike Adugo and addressed to the office of State Commissioner of Police, Eleyele, Ibadan, on behalf of Ezinifite Improvement Union (EIU), the group wondered why the police was yet to arrest Yussuf and Ibrol, who they say clearly played key roles in the death of Ofoma. "It is clear that Lucky and Daniel, including Daddy Ayo, indicted Yussuf, Smart and Ibrol in their statements. So, why is it that the police found it convenient to arrest only Smart, while Yussuf and Ibrol were merely invited and let go in a murder case?" the petition dated April 19, asked. It continued that Yussuf had threatened further attacks on key witnesses and other members of the union and warned of the consequences of assisting him to escape justice as Smart and Ibrol were acting on his orders. "Yussuf took photographs of our clients at Kuola Police

Station and threatened further attacks," the petition stated.

The petition is coming as Ibrol was alleged to have made attempts to collect the medical report at the University Teaching Hospital and had even made a deposit of Five Thousand Naira (N5,000) at the hospital, claiming to be a relative of the deceased. When *Saturday Sun* visited Kuola Police Station on Thursday April 28, the blue coloured Toyota Corolla car was still parked at the right wing of the premises. In an interview with the Police Public Relations Officer for the state, Superintendent Ade Ajisebutu, he initially said that he was not aware of the case, but later sent a text message on May 2, 2016, saying that police were waiting for the post mortem result before they can take further action on the matter. "For now, the police have reasons to arrest the two suspects in their custody. However, post mortem result will throw more light on the case. We will do thorough investigations. We will also ensure justice is done," the text read.



The late Emeka Ofoma



Ofoma's house