

# Anger as policemen on illegal duty kill welder over disputed land

• Agonised widow wants husband's remains released, begs IGP, Sanwo-Olu for justice

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**By Lukman Olabiyi**

**Twenty-five-year-old Bukola Erinfoami is yet to get over her grief following the brutal murder of her 27-year-old husband, Wale, allegedly by policemen engaged by a land-owning family to prosecute a dispute.**

The mother of three girls; a six-year-old and two-year-old twins, tried hard to hold back tears as she narrated how her husband was felled in his prime by the bullets of some rampaging mobile policemen.

Bukola, with a heavy heart and teary eyes, said on the day her husband was killed, he bade her farewell, embraced his children in turns and said he was gone to work.

She said: "I never had any inkling of a bad omen hanging on my husband as he left home, full of life. He promised to buy the children some things on his way back. Towards evening, he called to inform me that he might be coming back a little late as he had more jobs to do; He was an artisan, a welder. It was about a few hours later that someone rushed to call me that my husband had been shot and that he was dead. I raced to the place almost half nude with my three children to ascertain the veracity of the news, but I was unable to see his corpse. I ran round the vicinity of the site of the incident to see if he was being hidden somewhere in the bush. But all I could see were two pools of blood without my husband.

"When I pressed to know what could have happened to his remains if indeed he was dead, two of his friends who came to break the news to me informed that my husband had been taken to a mortuary in Ikorodu by the Police at Odongunyan Division. I rushed to the police station to seek clarifications on what happened to my husband. The police would not attend to me; rather they treated me with disdain. They told me casually that the matter had been transferred to the state CID in Panti, Lagos. When I requested to see the corpse of my husband at the General hospital in Ikorodu, they told me bluntly that I could not see him and that only the police could give such permission. Again, I went back to the police station in Ikorodu to get the permission but they insisted I could not see him. At this point, I became more confused and angry as I could not fathom any reason why the police would not allow me to see his body. I am bereaved and mourning and I believe I deserve to know what really happened to my husband."

Bukola lamented that her late husband wasn't fighting anyone, neither did he belong to any cult group to warrant his brutal murder in the broad daylight.

"They have made me a widow at noon," she cried. "They have denied me the fruit of my matrimony and they have made my children fatherless, even as toddlers

"He told me he was going to work to fend for me and the three children, and I believed him. He was a responsible father and husband. A week before the incident, he had promised to give me some money to boost my phone recharge card business as he was expecting some money. All that has vanished into the air with his untimely death. Now, where do I go from here?"

Bukola appealed to the police to allow her to see the remains of her husband, even as she urged the new Inspector General of police, Usman Alkali Baba, and Lagos State governor, Mr Babajide Sanwo-Olu to help bring her husband's killers to justice.

But what could have caused the young man's death? Bukola said she was told by eyewitnesses at the scene that he might have been a victim of an invasion of a parcel of land by some mobile policemen from MOPOL 4 Unit based in Ibadan. The policemen, it was gathered, had overrun the territory with sporadic shootings on that day, apparently on the promptings of one of the feuding parties to a sprawling piece of land where the deceased was working.

The homicide Section of the Nigeria Police, CID Panti Lagos confirmed the shooting and the death of Adewale Erinfolami, when contacted. It also confirmed that one Inspector Idris Sikiru of Mopol 4 Unit, Ibadan, was arrested, among other suspects in the matter and they are undergoing investigation. It informed further that that the matter has been transferred to some higher authorities at the Force Criminal Investigation Department (FCID), Abuja.

At the FCID Abuja, the Investigating Police Officer, Idris Ojacheke confirmed that the matter was indeed being handled there. He disclosed that several arrests have been made concerning the matter and more invitations were being extended to suspected individuals. He said the Commissioner of Police in charge of Homicide in the FCID, Area 10, Garki, Abuja could be contacted for further information..

It was reliably gathered, also, that the office of the Police Service Commission (PSC) in Abuja was showing interest in the matter. According to information gleaned from the Musliu Smith led commission, the agency was concerned about police officers turning themselves into willing tools in the hands of land grabbers to the extent of shooting and killing people without recourse to the police fundamental rules of engagement.

"We have a petition on the matter before us It is dated 19th March 2021" a top police officer in the office of the Chairman, PSC said. He informed that the commission might want to use this particular matter as an avenue to announce to all its employees that it would no longer be business as usual.

"The Police high command will not fold its hands and watch its image being continually soiled by some unscrupulous officers," he said.

Investigations showed that the FCID might be peeping into a lingering land imbroglio between two parties in Ikorodu as a lead in the killing of Adewale Erinfolami.

Several years back, the then Nigerian External Telecommunications, acting on the authority of then Governor-General of the country, acquired a parcel of land measuring 150.56 acres along the Ikorodu-Itamaga Road, in the Ikorodu Division, under the defunct Western Nigeria for public purposes and in particular for telecommunication development.

The parcels of land were reportedly acquired from three families – Loti Sanmolu Royal Family, Aro-Efolu/Otuseko/Ajisebiarameka Family and Regun Chieftaincy Family.

At the time of the acquisition, compensations were duly paid to each family, according to their claim of ownership without rancour, it was gathered. However, when the operation of NITEL moved to Abuja the federal government returned the land to the owning family, and the music started to change

Trouble started when one of the families, the Regun Family, claimed outright ownership of the parcels of land.

One of the claimants and a senior member of the Loti Sanmolu Family, Otunba Gbenga Kuti Erikitola, said despite documentary evidence and the intervention of the Ayangburen of Ikorodu, Oba Kabiru Adewal Shotobi that each owning family should limit itself to its own portion of the land, the Regun Family started selling the parcels of land in 2016. He added that the matter was taken to court in 2018 with an injunction restraining them from further sale of the land but regretted that the Regun Family didn't heed the court order.

When contacted on the litany of allegations against his family, including the deployment of the Mobile Police force that embarked on a shooting spree on the site and that they had been the agent provocateur in the land matter, the secretary of the Regun Family, Mr. Sharafa Dada Keyeolu, a k a Sharon, denied any knowledge of the allegations.

He said the entire land belongs to his family and they have a court judgment to back that claim. "I can't say anything more than that. You know the case is in court and the police are still investigating the murder case," he said,

Meanwhile, Bukola, her little children and Wale's relatives remain in pain, still unable to see the remains of the murdered welder. They want justice for the innocent man mowed down at 27 by trigger-happy cops.