

# A death too painful

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Orunmbe

## • How 22-year-old Kogi undergraduate was hacked down at masquerade festival

From **Emmanuel Adeyemi**, Lokoja

**He was full of energy, bubbling with a youthful agility. His gait was electrifying. Anywhere he went, his aura had always attracted a motley crowd around him.**

But on Sunday, May 26, 2025, he died, crashing all his beautiful dreams and presence of life. He was Opeyemi Orunmbe. A young man with beautiful dreams, one of which was becoming a noteworthy entrepreneur from where he would lift his family from its excruciating poverty.

He had outlined his plans to realise his dreams- through the instrumentality of education and vocational studies. Not surprising he had always topped his class and was fine at his vocational jobs, which helped him raise extra income for his survival.

His dreams died when he decided to unwind with his friends during a masquerade festival in a nearby community. That decision had become his greatest undoing. Unfortunately, he would not be alive to tell the story.

Opeyemi had travelled from his hometown, Takete Ide to Aiyedayo in the Mopamuro Local Government, Kogi State, to witness Egungun (masquerade) festival. It typically brings together people and culture enthusiasts.

At the crowded playground of the carnival, Opeyemi was caught in the web of argument that ensued between Iyah and Aiyede spectators. The argument was over the dancing schedule of some masquerades.

The argument snowballed into a fight in the Egungun grove. Community elders, sensing trouble, intervened and doused the tension. But that was only for a while.

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As the ceremony came to a close, with the evening sky rolling back, a fresh wave of anger began to rise between the warring youth groups, eventually catching up on Opeyemi.

In a whiff of momentary fury, he was stabbed at his neck with a jerk knife by a roving rascal. And that was the end. He was declared dead on arrival at the hospital where he was rushed to by sympathisers.

His death threw the community into panic and grief as that was never the intention of the festival. The festival was meant to celebrate the cultural heritage of the people but now, it has led to tragic death.

News of Opayemi's death spread like a wildfire. People are demanding a probe of the killing. Chairman, Mopamuro LG, Ademola Bello, issued order regulating public gatherings. Police also swung into action arresting three suspects, prime suspect, a native of Iyah Gbede, Ijumu LG and two Egungun priests.

Distraught father of the deceased, Pa Godwin Orunmbe, broke down in tears upon the passage of his only son: "I appreciate the outpouring of emotions and concerns by many groups and individuals. It is a very trying moment for my family. Our only hope for justice is in God and the government. The perpetrators must be brought to account if only to strengthen the sanctity of human life."

A family said: "It is about a month now that our son was murdered and the memory remains fresh in our minds. Nothing can assuage this calamity. All that we ask is for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

"This is crucial for the vindication of our son and the protection of society. Life is not cheap and the law must be seen to protect the weak. It is our prayer that God will guide all the relevant agencies to diligently investigate and follow up to a judicial conclusion."

Meanwhile, it was gathered that two of three suspects were released on bail. The prime suspect was, however, arraigned on Friday, June 13, 2025 and remanded at a correctional centre.