

After the Ibadan Flood, Policeman, Two Others Found Floating in River

Tunde Sanni in Ibadan

Once again, the season is here when hapless citizens are flushed and washed away by angry floods, after the heavens seem to have released all of its rain. That was what happened in Ibadan, Oyo State last weekend.

If there was any more evidence needed to prove how torrential the rain was, the body of three persons, one of them, a policeman, found floating atop River Dandaru, along Queen Elizabeth Road in the city was enough attestation. Even their car was also swept off by the fierce flood that followed.

The discovery of the lifeless bodies shows the degree of the casualties suffered from the flood after the heavy downpour of last Saturday and Sunday in Ibadan. There just may be some other bodies yet unseen.

The discovery of the bodies yesterday confirmed the worst fears of their relations, who for four days had been frantic with worry about the whereabouts of their relations, who suddenly went missing after the rains and flood. At the river bank yesterday, many people wailed uncontrollably as the bodies were ferried out of the river by local divers and neighbours.

One of the bodies was identified as Ojo Ijebo, a policeman from the Special Anti-robbery Squad (SARS). Others were Sunkanmi Iyiola and Wole Iyiola. They were said to be brothers. One of the relatives of the Iyiolas, Mrs. Bunmi Qudus, who spoke to THISDAY, confirmed amidst sobs, that the victims were indeed victims of the ravaging flood of last weekend. She narrated that the duo were not only swept away, even their car was swept away along Favours area on Bodija/Secretariat Road during the downpour.

She added that they had been searching for them since Sunday morning, when the rain subsided. When they could not find them, they reported that their

relations were missing at the police station.

"They left home around 10.30 pm for a night club. But after sometime, we did not have contact with any of them. We thought that they would return in the morning, but we did not see any of them, and since then we have been searching and worrying about their safety and whereabouts, only to be called some minutes ago that their bodies have been discovered," Qudus said.

As a result of the downpour over the weekend, relatives of missing persons had stormed the river bank when information on the discovery of the bodies filtered into the community. They were accompanied by sympathisers who could not hold back tears weeping freely.

Others whose relatives were not among the discovered bodies however turned back with search parties still dispatched to other notable rivers, possibly for more discoveries.

Speaking with journalists after the bodies had been taken away in an ambulance, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Deputy Superintendent

of Police Olabisi Ilobanafor, confirmed that three bodies, out of five missing persons, had been recovered.

She said search parties had been sent to other parts of the city to search for the two persons who were still missing. She said that two policemen who are on leave were among the five persons under the search list. "We have recovered one of the policemen," she said.

Officials from the state branch of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), policemen, Federal Fire Service and other security agencies were there to help recover the bodies of the drowned people.

About this same time last year, a torrential rainfall at night had provoked a devastating flood in Ibadan that swept away several homes including their inhabitants. In that incident, over a 100 persons were said to have been killed by the flood, as the midnight deluge not only hampered rescue efforts, but also made the people all the more vulnerable and helpless. The flash flood subsequently cut off several communities from water and electricity supply. Most of the areas affected then were Oke-Ayo, Odo Ona-Apata, Apete, Oluyole, etc.

It was so serious that Governor Abiola Ajimobi had to engage the service of helicopters to undertake rescue operations as well as distribute relief materials to displaced persons. He had vowed at the time to embark on massive de-silting of the blocked drainages in the city as well as clear all water channels, which had hampered the free flow of rain water so that subsequent rainfalls would not be as devastating.

But the rain of last weekend, considered child's play, seems to have nullified whatever preparation the state government seems to have made towards the rainy season. And more rains are still expected. Will this mean more woes for Ibadan and its residents?

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