




Metro & Crime

## Father Of 10 Killed Over Inability To Pay N60m Ransom

 January 28, 2022  Taiwo Jimoh  Comment(0)

Mr. Gbenga Falana, a 37-year-old father of 10 children and five wives, has been shot to death in the Yewa area of Ogun State by suspected kidnappers, over the inability of his family members to cough up N60 million ransom. The deceased, a hotel manager, was abducted on January 12, 2022, in front of the hotel where he worked and whisked away into the forest. He would later be found dead, with bullets to his forehead and chest. According to his grieving family members, less than two hours after his abduction, the kidnappers called, demanding a N60 million ransom.

However, following pleadings from Gbenga's distraught relatives, the kidnappers reduced the money to N50 million, which they still couldn't raise. Gbenga's elder sister, Miss Temitope Falana, said she was in her shop, attending to customers when she heard gunshots. According to Temitope, when she heard the gunshots, she had initially thought operatives of the Nigerian Customs and smugglers were once again in a gun duel, unaware that the shooters had grabbed her brother. She said: "When I heard what happened, I rushed to the hotel and begged people to join us in searching for Gbenga, hoping that we could rescue him.

But people were reluctant, saying they didn't have guns to protect themselves. After making frantic efforts that night without results, we went to Abeokuta, Ogun State Police Headquarters, Elewera, to make a report and possibly track his phone in order to rescue him. While we were still at Abeokuta, one of his wives went to Igbogila Police Station to report the incident. 

Temitope said that Gbenga was shot on the forehead and chest at close range. She opined that he was killed because, “we couldn’t pay the ransom they demanded. I cried my heart out that day, but there was nothing I could do. Our father is old and our mother is late.” She further narrated: “We were made to understand that he was killed the second day; that was after waiting for the money without a response from us. Whenever they called, we always begged them that even if we sell all our property, we couldn’t raise such an amount of money.

Whenever I spoke with them, I always wept because they repeatedly threatened to kill him and then they carried out their threat. We have accepted our fate, but the only issues we have now is how to take care of his wives and the 10 children he left behind.” Temitope explained that a few hours before the kidnappers killed Gbenga, she called them about 3am, pleading with them.

The kidnappers told her that the person they came for was exactly the person they picked, that there was no mistake. “And then they said that we should go to a bush path to pick his corpse. My father had been in pain,” said Temitope. She further stated: “This is not the first time we’re witnessing kidnapping in our community, but this is the most touching. Those they kidnapped before now, they don’t kill them; they only collect ransom and then release the victims. Gbenga was the one who advised me to leave Lagoand return home because business thrives in our village due to the cement factory. But we don’t have security in our community.

God is our protector and there is also no government presence in our area. No electricity and no good roads.” The aged father of Gbenga, Pa Steven Falana, who is also the Baale of the community, said a lot of people had been kidnapped in recent times, but none had ever been killed. He didn’t understand why his son’s case was different. The bereaved father recalled: “A day before my son was killed, I called him on the phone to come and drive me to a function, but he didn’t pick his calls. Unfortunately, it was that night my son was kidnapped in front of his work place. Since the establishment of the cement factory in our community, crime rates have increased. A few minutes after the kidnappers took him away, they called to demand a N60 million ransom, which they later reduced to N50 million. I don’t have such an amount of money.

I want government assistance in the security aspect. My fear now is the children who trek about three miles to get to their various schools; they are not safe.” Gbenga’s first wife, Mrs. Cecilia Falana, said she was at home cooking when she heard gunshots and suddenly one of her husband’s brothers rushed to her, shouting that Gbenga had been kidnapped and dragged into the forest. She said: “I immediately left what I was doing, and what came to my mind was to rush into the bush to start looking for him. I heard people saying they couldn’t go in search of him because they had no guns. We returned home. But that night, I couldn’t sleep.

I cried throughout, thinking about solutions to the situation. On that day that he was kidnapped, some residents and I went to the hotel where he worked with the hope that police from Igbogila Police Station would come. Unfortunately, they didn’t. While we were still there, we continued to hear gunshots of the kidnappers. If we had effective police personnel, my husband would have been rescued that night.

Residents were not armed, but the police are armed. I kept calling my husband’s phone, praying that the kidnappers would allow him to speak with me. It was one of the kidnappers who picked the calls and told me that we should get N60 million ready. That was how we started begging them. The following day, we continued to beg until the ransom was reduced to N50 million. My husband didn’t have such an amount of money. It was the vigilante group that went to rescue him the following day and found his corpse.” The deceased’s second wife, Mrs. Esther Falana, said her last conversation with Gbenga was when he called to inform her that he was taking his car to a mechanic workshop for repairs. She said: “After fixing the car, he called back to inform me that he had returned to the hotel. I asked him to come home. I was still expecting him when the information of his being kidnapped got to me. Since then, I have not been myself.” A former Councillor,



survive with his family. The scene of the abduction is a stone's throw to his father's house.

It gave us a lot of concern. I'm calling on the Ogun State government and the state's commissioner of police, to come to our rescue. We're no longer safe and our major concern is the children trekking to school on a daily basis. We have a cement factory in our community, where a lot of important personalities are working. I believe that is why kidnapping is thriving in our area. The abductors believe everyone in the community is rich because of the cement factory. We have an influx of people from West African countries.

Before, we knew ourselves, but now, when an apartment is given out to let to a stranger, before you know it, about 20 people would be living in that apartment. We don't know them and we don't know their backgrounds." He revealed that the community had written to Dangote cement factory on how to provide security in the community. One of the suggestions was that the company should empower the local vigilante groups so as to beef up security. Ogunyinka opined that routes, not known in the community by the police, are known by the vigilante groups. The youth leader in the community, Mr. Kabiru Falana, another sibling to Gbenga, said that the abduction of his elder brother was a cause for serious concern in the community.

His words: "We want security in our community. We cannot sleep with our eyes closed. This is not the first time such an incident is happening in our area. A businessman had been abducted and he paid N1 million before he was freed. Another person was also picked and he paid N1million.

A woman, Carol, who owns a bar, was also kidnapped and N2 Million was collected from her. This is just to tell you that we are sitting on a keg of gunpowder in the Yewa community. Just last year, about five persons were abducted. Just to avoid a crisis, we warned our children not to retaliate if slapped by a northerner. We have also called all tribes to be security conscious. We have cordial relationships with other tribes, those who abducted and killed Gbenga also threatened that no amount of vigilante we deployed would be able to stop them from storming our community again. We don't have arms and ammunition to confront them. The police who can do that are not responding to our calls. We're at the mercy of the Almighty God."

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