

MegaCity

Tunde Sulaiman
COORDINATOR
Email: tunsul2@gmail.com
Tel: 08050498544

Ifon, the headquarters of Ose Local Government, recently erupted in violent protest over the death of two persons. Irate youth burnt the police station in the community. **BABATOPE OKEOWO** reports the incident and the demand for justice by the community

Outrage and grief filled the compound of Mr. Tubosun Bobade as family members, friends, and sympathisers gathered to mourn the tragic death of 17-year-old Tolu Bobade. The young boy was allegedly tortured to death by officers of the Ifon Police Division, sparking widespread condemnation and calls for justice.

The death of the teenager made family members and community leaders call on Governor Lucky Ayedatiwa, through the Ondo State Commissioner for Justice and Attorney General, Dr Kayode Ajulo; the Inspector General of Police, Kayode Egbetokun, and the Commissioner of Police in Ondo State, Olutokunbo Wilfred Afolabi, as well as Amnesty International (AI), to launch independent investigations and ensure justice is done on the brutal killing of the boy.

A sombre atmosphere enveloped the Bobade's residence in the community when we visited, with tearful relatives demanding accountability for what they described as a brutal and unjust killing of the promising child of the family.

At the family house, members remain dejected, lamenting the lack of justice following the tragic death in police custody of the young Bobade. This loss has ignited widespread outrage among the youths of Ifon, the capital of Ose Local Government in Ondo State.

Official position

The incident according to a press statement issued on February 16, 2025 by the Ondo State Police Command's Public Relations Officer, Funmilayo Odunlami-Omisanya (CSP), said preliminary reports indicated that the incident began on February 15 when a dispute between two families on Ogbomo Street escalated into a public fight. The statement explained that officers from the Ifon Division, led by an Inspector, responded promptly, intervened in the altercation, and made several arrests while some suspects fled.

The statement noted that one "Tobi Bobade" described as a young man involved in the fight was brought to the station by Mr. Losilosi, appeared weak, and was rushed to a nearby hospital where he was later pronounced dead.

The statement said the deceased

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Two of the victims



body was deposited at the Federal Medical Centre, Owo, pending a post-mortem examination.

The statement read: "The Commissioner of Police, Ondo State Command, CP Wilfred Olutokunbo Afolabi, visited Ifon for an on-the-spot assessment of areas affected in the attack by some members of the community. The CP strongly condemned the attack and arson on the Divisional Police Station and ordered a full-scale investigation to determine the circumstances that led to the incident and to bring those responsible to justice. Preliminary reports indicate that the incident began on 15th February 2025 when a dispute between two families on Ogbomo Street, Ifon, escalated into a public fight.

"Officers from the Ifon Division, led by an Inspector, responded promptly, moved to the scene, intervened, and made arrests while some suspects fled. Fortunately, no lives were lost in the fire as security personnel acted swiftly and called for reinforcements to secure the premises.

"The Commissioner of Police, in the course of his visit, met with the chairman of the local government, community leaders, and other stakeholders in the community.

"In his address, the Commissioner of Police, on behalf of the Inspector General of Police, commiserated with the family of the deceased and condemned the attack on the station as he vowed that such acts of lawlessness would not be tolerated. He assured that all those responsible for this criminal act will face the full weight of the law."

Family, community fault police

However, challenging the official version of the police, community leaders and family members vehemently challenged the report. They argued that the Police statement failed to adequately explain the circumstances leading to the arrest and subsequent death of Tolu.

Dupe Bobade, an uncle of the deceased in an interview clarified that his neph-

ew's correct name is Tolu Bobade and not Tobi Bobade as stated by the police.

Similarly, the grieving father, Tubosun Bobade recounted that his son was in good health and full of life on the day of his arrest. He said Tolu had been out for a stroll with his younger brother when he witnessed a friend who collapsed while being forcibly apprehended by the police. In a bid to help, he approached the scene, only to be arrested himself. The father maintained that his son had no involvement in any family dispute or fight; instead, he was simply trying to aid a distressed friend.

The distressed father said: "He told me he was going out, and he was hale and hearty. Later, I heard there was a fight at the junction, and he saw a friend who needed help. That was where the police arrested him. His mother is late. I have been taking care of him since then. I know my son very well, and people in this town know him; he never had a fight with anybody; he was an easy-going boy. Please, I need the help of Nigerians; we need justice for the death of my son; the government should come to my aid."

A community leader, Olaniyi Eni-Olootu alleged that police officers while attempting to arrest local youths, resorted to severe beatings. He said Tolu Bobade, who is now deceased, only went to greet his friends but was arrested and beaten to the point of unconsciousness.

Eni-Olootu explained that when the police took him to the station, he was not feeling well, so they took him to Adelabu Hospital. The hospital later referred him to FMC Owo, but he was confirmed dead on arrival. The police then deposited his body in the morgue without informing his family.

The community leader said: "Tolu Bobade, who went out merely to greet his friends, was arrested and beaten into unconsciousness, I think when

the police took him to the station, and he was feeling unwell, so they took him to Adelabu, the hospital referred them to FMC Owo, where he was confirmed dead. They deposited his corpse in the morgue without informing his parents."

Another elder in the community, Adesida Joshua, recounted that some of his workers witnessed a police officer mercilessly beating the young boy, an assault so brutal that the victim was forced to defecate on himself. He condemned the actions of the police officers, saying that if the issue had been handled civilly, the crisis could have been averted. The community leaders said evidence of similar torture on other arrested individuals further bolsters the community's claims that Tolu was subjected to excessive and lethal force.

Another death

In a related incident on February 16, 2025, a promising young man; a father of two children, aged six months and seven years, was allegedly shot by an officer attached to the same Ifon Police Division.

According to his stepmother, Mrs. Bunmi Orisamolade, a confrontation had erupted between her children and a community member, leading to a police raid at 4:00 a.m. during which phones and other valuables were seized.

She said the police intended to arrest one of her sons, who was unwell and not at home during the raid. She said the police later located him and brutally beat him despite his illness.

At the scene, Tolu Bobade had arrived to assist his friend but was also detained. Mrs. Orisamolade explained that after one of her sons was arrested early in the morning, her other son was detained later in the day alongside Tolu, and both were allegedly subjected to severe beating.

She said as enraged local youths besieged and angrily attacked the police station in protest, her stepson identified as Bamise Orisamolade was shot while en route to the hospital to check on his siblings. Eni-Olootu buttressed Orisamolade's position that the young man, who had joined the protesting crowd, was fatally shot by police amidst the chaos.

Demand for justice

In a heartfelt message from overseas, Mr. Ayodele Adigun a member of the Ifon Descendants Association (IDA) in the United Kingdom (UK) extended his condolences to the bereaved families and the Ifon community. Adigun condemned the alleged actions of the police officers responsible for the unwarranted deaths, insisting that those involved must be held accountable and brought to justice.

He promised financial support to the affected families and urged the aggrieved youths to maintain the peace, allowing the law to take its course while a thorough investigation into the incidents should be conducted.

A resident of the town, Mr Sunday Olorunbobi, condemned the arrest of five individuals, whom the police have kept in custody without charging them to court.

His words: "As usual, the police entered

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the community and arrested five innocent citizens, detaining them at the Akure police headquarter without charging them to court. The Commissioner of Police stated that their release was conditional upon the community beginning the reconstruction of the burnt police station in Ifon."

Similarly, community leaders and parents of the deceased called on the Inspector General of Police Kayode Egbetokun, Ondo State Commissioner of Police, Olu-tokunbo Wilfred Afolabi, the Ondo State

Attorney General, Dr. Kayode Ajulo and other relevant agencies to launch an exhaustive investigation into the alleged police brutality so that unfair and unjust treatment of the deceased would not go unpunished.

Police react

However, reacting the Police Public Relations Officer, Mrs Funmilayo Odunlami-Omisanya asked the community to wait for the investigation which has been launched by the command.

Her words "The Police Command urges

members of the public to remain calm and refrain from taking the laws into their own hands. Investigations are ongoing, and further updates will be provided as the investigation progresses."

While the police have pledged to probe the matter, residents of Ifon remain on edge, anxiously awaiting clarity and justice in what many are calling a dark chapter in their community's history. Fingers are crossed, and hopes are high that this investigation will soon yield the answers that the community so desperately seeks.