



•Victims of illegal detention camp...fed with concoctions, manacled and raped

Pics. Dare Fasube



•Another group of detainees in the illegal detention camp...unveiled by the police at Ibadan yesterday

## Two die inside Ibadan torture chamber

- Victims fed with concoction, manacled, raped—Police
- Why we took children there — Parents
- I was only trying to cure them of insanity —Cleric

A cleric who allegedly operated a torture chamber in Ibadan, Oyo State capital, is in police net

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Ibadan

As they were ushered into the premises of Oyo State police Criminal Investigation Department with manacles on their feet, bruises all over their bodies, many people who thronged the police station mistook them for armed robbers. They looked emaciated. Nobody in his wildest imagination ever thought they were detained by an Islamic teacher. There were 23 of them most of whom were children between ages 13 and 18. Among them were also four adolescent girls. The sight reminds one of the ugly spectacle of slave trade. With manacles on their feet and little strength that remained in them, they tip-toed and sometimes hopped as far as the shackles could allow them. As they hopped, they gnashed their teeth in pains. Indeed, they were objects of pity. One elderly and thick-bearded man in his 60s followed them.

### Toostubborn and unruly

As they sat down waiting for the briefing of the state commissioner of police, Prince Udom Ekpoudom, inquisitive journalists moved closer to them to know their alleged offence. They had been taken to Ganiyu Imoniyi, an Islamic cleric by their parents who thought the children, being too stubborn and unruly, should be taken to the cleric, who allegedly operated a private detention camp, to be taught hard lessons that would force them to toe the line. They must have been lucky to be alive to tell the story as there were those alleged to have been tortured to death.

**Journey into 'slavery':** Most of the victims who spoke to *Sunday Vanguard* explained that they were forced to the

I wanted to travel to London but my parents insisted that I should go to Saudi Arabia. Later, they were duped of N350,000 and lied that I sent the cheats to dupe them. This prompted my mother to take me to Imoniyi under the pretense that he would teach me how to read Quran very well. When I got there that day, I was taken to a room upstairs. To my surprise, the guards of the *alfa* started beating me until I became weak. Thereafter, they used chains on my legs. I was there for three years until I fell



•Prime suspect, Islamic alfa, Ganiyu Imoniyi...operating a torture chamber?

place by their parents. For the youngest victim, Wasiu Azeez, 13, he was tricked by his mother who deceived him that she was taking him to a place where he would be properly taken care of. Though, the prime suspect alleged that all his captives had insanity problems when their parents brought them, he could not substantiate his claim. Another victim, Nurudeen Olawoyin, contradicted the Islamic teacher. He said, "My parents wanted me to be self employed, hence they invited me from Lagos where I worked in a government establishment to Ibadan where I engaged in petty trading.

sick. They took me to a hospital and when I recovered, they brought me back to the house. But instead of taking me upstairs where the torture chamber is, they took me downstairs where the students learn Arabic."

Mulikat Bashiru of Foko Ayaragaga area of Ibadan said her mother was not pleased with the kind of friends she associated with and threatened to deal with her. "She then packed my luggage and took me to the man's house." With tears rolling down their cheeks, they recalled how their 'teacher' tortured them. The young Wasiu said, "He chained us in the room. He didn't allow

us to go out. He would give us concoction mixed with excreta and palm oil and tell us to drink. "To bath was a luxury. We were not properly fed. As I am now, I'm hungry." Though the four girls among them had more freedom by running errands for the two wives of the *alfa* in the house, one of them alleged that they were raped. According to Mulikat, "When we got there, they shaved our pubic hair and since October, 2006, I have not menstruated. From time to time, they gave us some concoction to drink. This would make us unconscious. We don't really know who the rapists are. They would hide under the cover of darkness to carry out the rape. Each time we were raped, the lower part of my abdomen would become hard."

On why they did not tell their parents about the way they were being treated, another victim, Zainab Ogunjinmi, said she did once but regretted her action following the severe beating she received. "On that day, my mum came to me. And usually they didn't always allow our parents to enter the torture chamber upstairs. I complained to her about the inhuman treatment that the guards, on the instruction of the *alfa*, were subjecting us to. When mum left, I was beaten to a pulp. See the scars of the fan belt they used to beat me on my left arm. As from that time, I took it as my lot. The wives treated us like slaves. We would grind pepper and wash clothes." When *Sunday Vanguard* visited the alleged torture chamber, the facility had iron door with huge locks. It was a secluded place. The suspect explained that he was running Islamic school and that over 200 people had been trained since he started 25 years ago.

**Why I handed over my child, by parent:** When Mrs. Aderonke Asekun, mother of one of the victims, was interviewed by *Sunday Vanguard*, she explained that her son was a truant who would not listen to her. "When I tried all I could to control him without success, somebody then told me about the *alfa* at Eleta that he had cured so many people. "And since he got there, he has changed. Many other parents who were arrested alongside the suspects said their wards had become vagabonds and, that that informed their decision. The prime suspect dismissed all the claims of his victims, saying they were all mad by the time they took

them to his place. When asked by a policeman to bring out any two among them who were still showing signs of insanity, he called them. But to his disappointment, they showed no sign as they spoke reasonably well. One of them started raining curses on the *alfa* when he learnt about his claim of madness to the police.

According to the cleric, the victims were just trying to paint the picture that he maltreated them. "I did not punish them. They bathed every three days. As for the chains, we didn't want them to escape." He, however, kept mum when he was asked if he was permitted by law to put innocent people in a private cell.

**Police account:** The state police commissioner said it was unfortunate that such criminality could take place in Ibadan. "The *alfa* not only fed his victims with concoction everyday, but also beat them silly and turned the women among them to sex machines. He would shave their pubic hair and force them to drink concoction prepared with their excreta." The state public relations officer, Ms. Olabisi Okuwobi, said the suspects would be charged with

**The alfa not only fed his victims with concoction everyday, but also beat them silly and turned the women among them to sex machines**

murder following reports that two of the victims had died. "We would investigate to ascertain if they died when he tortured them", the PPRO stated.

**Protest:** While aggrieved sympathizers were saying the man was lucky to have escaped being lynched, some Islamic clerics came to the police station calling for his release. To them, the Islamic teacher was just being persecuted. They were said to have been trying to get in touch with a notable Ibadan politician and highly respected leader of Islam in the state to use their influence to release the suspects.

Okuwobi said the victims had been taken to the Children Welfare Department, Oyo State Secretariat, for proper care. She added that the parents of the victims may be charged for conspiracy. Okuwobi spoke further, "During investigation, some other things came up. We found out that two persons died. If we discover that they died as a result of torture, the *alfa* may be charged with murder."



•Cross section of the detainees with the Oyo State police boss