



From left: Otunba Adebayo Christopher Alao-Akala, former Oyo State Governor; his wife, Oluwakemi and Chief Sunday Adewusi, former Inspector General of Police, singing at the Former Gov Akala 2012 inter-denominational Xmas carol, at Opadoyin Akala Lodge Ogbomoso.

## Christmas tragedy: 7 soldiers, 3 others die in road crashes

BY KINGSLEY OMONOBI

**A**BUJA—SEVEN soldiers who recently graduated from the School of Artillery in Kotangora, Niger State, met their untimely death, Sunday, as they were crushed by a truck along Abaji-Abuja road.

This came as another accident involving an 18-seater Toyota Hiace bus on Abaji-Lokoja road killed three passengers, while three others sustained injuries.

Military sources told *Vanguard* that the newly trained artillery soldiers had just graduated from a course at the Nigerian Army School of Artillery in Niger State and boarded an Edo-bound vehicle, all clad in their military attires obviously elated that they had finished the tough course and were going home to join their loved ones before the accident happened.

### Engine problem

The engine of their chartered Edo-bound bus was said to have developed a fault shortly before Abaji town when all the passengers, made up of the seven soldiers and some civilians, disembarked and stood close to it while the driver was working on the problem.

It was learnt that suddenly and unknown to them, a cement truck, lost control and in an attempt to bring it to a halt, ran into the bus and crushed the soldiers. The civilian passengers of the bus sustained several degrees of injuries.

Contacted on the development, the Chief of Staff, Department of Army Public Re-

lations, Colonel Agim, said the death of the soldiers was con-

firmed by the Garrison Command but added that full de-

## EFCC arrests Bi-Courtney boss, Babalakin

By IFEANYI OKOLIE

**T**HE embattled Chairman of Bi-Courtney Highway Services, Mr. Wale Babalakin, who is being prosecuted by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, for alleged money laundering was arrested yesterday, by operatives of the commission, shortly after he was discharged from the Lagos University Teaching Hospital, LUTH.

Babalakin, who spent 23 days at the hospital, was scheduled to be arraigned before Justice Adeniyi Onigbanjo of Ikeja High Court, Thursday, November 30, 2012 but his arraignment was scuttled by his admission in the hospital. After his arrest, yesterday, he was swiftly taken to the commission's Ikoyi office in Lagos, where he was detained.

Spokesman for the Commission, Wilson Uwujaren, who confirmed the arrest to *Vanguard*, said Babalakin has been granted bail, adding that he was, however, yet to perfect the process. He said: "Yes he was arrested and he is currently in our office in Ikoyi, Lagos. In fact he has been granted bail but he is yet to perfect it. He will appear in court on January 17, 2013"

Babalakin had made several efforts to stop his trial by the EFCC. He had approached a Federal High Court, seeking an order to enforce his fundamental human right by way of preventing the EFCC, agents or security agencies of government from harassing, arresting or detaining him, further to the charge filed by the EFCC at the Lagos High

Court.

Justice Ibrahim Buba, however, dismissed his application saying "it was wrong for the applicant to approach the court to enforce his fundamental human right when there was a pending criminal charge against him at the state high court", noting that the personal liberty of an individual was not absolute. The judge also said it will not augur well for the peace and progress of the society if any person with a criminal charge in a court approaches another to enforce his fundamental human right; adding that "nobody is above the law, no matter the person's position or status."

### Dismissal of application

He said Babalakin as a Senior Advocate of Nigeria should not be afraid to face the court and, therefore, dismissed his application as lacking in merit.

EFCC's counsel, Mr Rotimi Jacobs, SAN, had told the court that the commission is vested with the power to investigate, arrest and prosecute persons for financial crimes. He also told the court that Babalakin did not abide by the terms of the administrative bail granted him by the Commission. On the issue of Babalakin's ill-health which his counsel, Wale Akoni, SAN, made copious reference to, Rotimi said that there was nothing before the court on the current state of the suspect's health.

Rotimi said: "It is not a case of denial of fundamental human

rights but a case of non-compliance to enjoy that right. The suit is intended to gag the EFCC so that they will not take him to court."

Justice Buba had on Monday, December 17, 2012 refused to grant an ex-parte order restraining the EFCC from arresting or detaining Babalakin without hearing from the respondents. Rather, the judge ordered Babalakin to serve the respondents to enable them respond to the motion on notice.

### 5 drown in Omambala River, in Anambra

Five teenagers also reportedly drowned in Omambala River at Umu-ezeanam, Anambra West, Local Government Area, yesterday.

The children, four boys and a girl went swimming for fun in the river where they were later allegedly found to have drowned.

Four of the victims, who are from the same family, including the girl among them, and their friend, had travelled with their parents from Lagos to the village for the yuletide celebrations when they met their untimely end on Christmas Eve.