



### **Murder most foul: How they get away with murder By Boniface Mwangi**

Caroline Mwatha was murdered. Police have presented their version of what transpired and identified the murder suspects, yet many questions still beg for an answer. We don't know how she ended up in the clinic, for example. Did she walk there by herself? Was she threatened, or coerced to go to that clinic? To date, her phone is still missing.

A human rights defender, Caroline Mwatha, spoke for the voiceless. The very ones on the receiving end of police violations. As a founding member of Dandora Social Justice, she defended the rights of young people who were subjected to constant police harassment, arbitrary arrests, extortion, trumped-up charges and even extra-judicial killings. It is not lost on us that the people who celebrated Caroline's death are the police hit squad, nicknamed "Hessy". Hessy isn't an individual, but a bunch of sadistic police officers who routinely execute suspects in Eastlands every other day. After Caroline's body was found, they did a long post on Facebook. In October 2018, Kenya Police

executed 11 people in Dandora and in November, more young people were shot dead. Since December, however, not a single person has been executed by police in Dandora. This is no miracle. It's as a direct result of Caroline Mwatha's, and the Dandora Social Justice Team's, tireless unselfish efforts in exposing extra-judicial killings.

When Jacob Juma was murdered in May of 2016, police said he was last seen with a woman. When IEBC Commissioner, Chris Msando was assassinated in July 2017, they killed the young woman he was allegedly last seen with, in a bid to malign his reputation. Her name was Carol Ngumbu. She was barely 21.

Kenya is a very pretentious country. The moment an ordinary person is seen with someone they're not married to, or found to have committed an error of judgment, we are so quick to believe whatever lies the police or politicians feed us. But if you're rich and influential, politicians will host you, churches will roll out the red carpet for you to speak from the pulpit and media will extol your virtues as though you were a saint. We know of politicians who beat their wives, have sired children in every village, steal, rape and kill, yet they will never be executed in cold blood by the police, nor will the police ever share contents of their text messages with the public.

The police didn't give us Mutula Kilonzo's sordid sexual history when he died in his Maanzoni ranch. I haven't seen the same effort being used to discredit Caroline Mwatha, applied in corruption cases. It's only used in murder cover-ups, like Msando's and Juma's. When Sharon Otieno was allegedly killed by Governor Obado her past sexual relations were brought up. In matters abortion, most private hospitals in Kenya offer walk-in abortions but more than 2,600 poor women and girls die every year due to unsafe abortions – a staggering seven lives per day. It's the poor who die for things the rich access easily every day.

If someone dies in your house, or car, the mortuary cannot receive the body without a police occurrence book (OB) report. I once picked a hit-and-run victim and rushed him to the hospital. Unfortunately, he died on the way. I was forced to go to the police to report his death and get an OB number, before the mortuary would accept his body.

This we know for sure, Caroline did not kill herself. She was murdered. Her killers checked her body into the city mortuary, like one would a library book. How callous? When did life become so cheap? Why were they allowed to book the body without an OB number?

Robert Ouko was murdered, but the police claimed he committed suicide by shooting himself in the head, pouring petrol on his body and setting himself on fire. Mysteriously, anyone who was involved in the Ouko case died shortly thereafter. A parliamentary report prepared in 2005 stated that former Foreign Affairs Minister Robert Ouko was killed at State House, Nakuru. It further reported that he was murdered in cold blood, his body mutilated in the presence of Nicholas Biwott and President Moi (some reports even suggest that he pulled the trigger). His body was then dumped near his Koru home.

When outspoken government critic, Father Kaiser, was found dead on that cold August morning in 2000, it was reported that police claimed he was shot in a "gangland style execution." The story would later change when the Kenya Police and FBI colluded to concoct a story claiming that the catholic priest committed suicide. They claimed that he shot himself in the head with a shotgun and walked to an Acacia tree where he lay down his own body. The United States Congress passed a joint resolution calling Fr. Kaiser's death "an assassination", but the rapist, warmonger, who orchestrated his murder, became our ambassador to China and went on to run for governor.

Kenyan activists have a running joke, if we are killed, who among our friends will be used as collateral? Kenyan activists, at any given time, must tell a comrade(s) where they are. We don't fake disappearance. We don't cry wolf. A comrade, a friend, a relative must know where you are and with whom. It helps for easier tracking in the event that you suddenly go missing.

When Caroline's disappearance was reported, the police went silent only to later release a "very comprehensive" statement about the events leading to her death. This can only imply the police were on her trail, they knew her body was lying on a cold slab in a morgue, but they waited for the body to be discovered in order for them to release that statement. Here's a message for the Director of Criminal Investigations, George Kinoti, whom I consider an acquaintance, "In this case, you made grave mistakes. You allowed Caroline Mwatha's body, her medical history and her pregnancy to be used against her."

I don't know the exact circumstances of Caroline's death, but I am certain she was murdered. Today, I shall go to Uhuru Park to celebrate her life. Her memorial service will be held at Freedom Corner, Uhuru Park, from 3pm. I shall not stand on the sidelines and watch helplessly for a one-page police press statement to be used to define Caroline Mwatha, a human being, a human rights defender, a lover, daughter, sister, wife. Her death took minutes, maybe hours, but she lived 38 full years, she loved, she fought fearlessly, and she exited this stage we call life as a hero. Go forth comrade. Rest in Power. The struggle continues....

