

# Jos boils over police killings

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NIGERIA may need to enlist the services of crack detectives from the Scotland Yard to resolve the riddle surrounding the deaths of two youths, Mohamed S. Ahmed and Aminu Musa Masalar both of who met their tragic end in the Abattoir area of Jos, the Plateau State capital.

Besides, the claims and counter claims between the state police command and the parents of the two youths over who or what killed Ahmed and Masalar as well as the other key witnesses who claim they saw the police murder them, have further made the enlistment of such services quite imperative.

Ahmed, 24 years old and his 23-year old friend, Masala, precisely on that Tuesday night between 9:30 - 10:00 pm on February 6<sup>th</sup> 2007, that same night Nigerian soccer pride was battered in far away London, by Ghana in a friendly match, involving the wingless Super Eagles and Black Stars of Ghana, which the latter won 4-1. Witnesses recount how the youths were brutally shot by a trigger-happy policeman, as sympathizers had tried to help them out of their car which crashed moments ago.

But their deaths have become a source of controversy in the city, just as it has continued to raise deep emotions and concerns among the members of the public, even with the Human Rights community already intervening, if only to get to the bottom of the matter, and establish the truth regarding the tragedy.

According to witnesses who live within the neighbourhood of the incident, the youths had actually crashed their grey Honda Prelude car, marked Benue AH 86TKP, into a nearby shop on the road that night just as the big bang had attracted those of them (witnesses) already engrossed with the Nigeria/Ghana match outside to see what the bang was all about.

Their theory was that Mohamed, the deceased driver of the Prelude car, may have lost control of vehicle said to be coming from the Ray-field section of the road when he reportedly tried in vain to avoid an *Okada* (Achaba) rider, who was said to have suddenly made a U-turn thereby forcing the driver to suddenly apply his brake.

Two of the witnesses, Miss Patience Peter Dung -Part of whose house was affected, as well as Ezekiel Dung, both corroborated the story to the effect that they had rushed out to help out the unhurt victims although one was completely unconscious.

According to the 24-year old Ezekiel, "I was watching football when we heard the noise and decided to come out. When we came out, we discovered it was an accident case, although the victims were all alive. So I thought of helping them along with other sympathizers. In fact one of them gave me his phone with a number he asked me to help him call and inform the person of their plight. Then I called and got the person and told him the situation on ground, and he promised to come down immediately."

Mr. Ezekiel who is a furniture maker explained further that sympathizers who had thronged the scene of the incident, had interviewed Mohamed (the driver) on where they were coming from, "and he said, they were coming from Ray-field before we now searched their vehicle and found a gallon and a spare tyre".

This far, was indeed corroborated by Miss Patience Peter Dung who said she has already volunteered a written statement to the Anglo-Jos police station, where she said her mother chided by the police who did not like her guts and "Good Samaritan" role in the matter. The police, Miss Patience stressed, "warned my mother in stern language to stay clear of the matter".

The witness lamented that while men of the Rapid Response Squad (RRS) of the state police command along with the DPO of Abattoir police station were still trying to sort out the situation that night, another DPO (names withheld), from the Anglo-Jos Division, emerged from nowhere and gave a counter order to a sergeant from the RRS to shoot the two accident victims, now trying to gain full consciousness.

"We discovered they were accident victims as I said earlier and when the Abattoir DPO came, he ordered men of the RRS to search their car and further directed them to handcuff one of the victims who was conscious, and also to take the unconscious one to the hospital for medical attention.

"But while they were still debating this, the DPO from Anglo-Jos came and ordered a sergeant to shoot the victims. But when the sergeant



\*Ahmed

rebuffed the order, the DPO allegedly collected the rifle and shot the two boys, after which he now dragged them on the ground, and took them to his station, where their bodies were said to have been displayed.

"As my mother tried to locate their bodies at the station the following day (Wednesday), the DPO shouted at her and warned her not to interfere. However, I had already given my report (written statement) there", Patience concluded.

The testimonies of both parents of the deceased youths, were no less different from the witness accounts as they merely collaborated the evidences of one another, even as they alleged that it was all frame up by the police.

Alhaji Sadiq Sa'eed Mohammed is the father of Ahmed S. Mohammed as well as the Onu of Igala in Jos, while Alhaji Musa Masala, is the father of Aminu Musa Masala. According to them, both Ahmed and Aminu were on an errand for their master (David Sule) that night, by the time they were allegedly shot.

But what was the errand that could have taken them out that night when many Nigerians, especially youths were deeply engrossed in the Nigeria/Ghana match.

Mr. David Sule, Ahmed's master who also runs a hotel in the city was contacted. Even though from his hideout is said to have received threats from the police against opening up on the matter. According to him, "I had sent Ahmed - my driver and Personal Assistant (P.A) to go and get me the police to arrest some people that not only invaded my Ray-field apartment but were also beating Ahmed and my Mai-guard", David explained.

Daily Champion checks revealed that the group of attackers had arrived Mr. Sule's house around 9 pm, in search of one Mike a student of the University of Jos and a personal friend of Sule, whom they claimed was in possession of their handset. But as they failed to locate the said Mike, a brawl ensued later between them and members of Sule's household, as a result of which Sule now dispatched Ahmed and Aminu to go and bring police during which they now met their Waterloo in the hands of the same police.

At the Anglo-Jos police station, an officer on duty explained that the DPO in question was out, to help the monitoring of the security situation around Polo field where the vice-president and presidential candidate of Action Congress (AC), Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, was holding his North Central zonal rally of the party, Police allegations had also included the fact that the two boys had robbed a guest at Sophia Hotel in the metropolis. However, our investigations took us to the state police command headquarters Jos, where our correspondent met the Police Public Relations

Officer (PPRO), DSP Dominic Iornumbe, who brushed aside all the accounts of eye-witnesses besides those of the parents of the slain youths.

According to DSP Iornumbe, reports from his men indicate that Ahmed and Aminu were armed robbers who were fleeing from the police hot chase, after their alleged robbery operations were intercepted by police patrol team.

But when the issue of allegations that the boys were not only innocent victims of police brutality but that the command was already working to cover up the dastardly act, Iornumbe had flatly denied it all, particularly the accusations that the PDP shot them. Instead, the PPRO described as victims of their own motor accident, who may have met their death as result of the car crash.

But he acknowledged that there had been rumours and allegations that a police officer may have indeed murdered these boys, even as he assured that the command was investigating the matter: "I can assure you that the CP (commissioner of police) here will bring whoever the culprit is to book, and he is such a man that will never protect or cover up misdeemeanour from any of his men no matter how highly placed; that is certain", the DSP reassured.

As the matter got further complicated and knotty, our correspondent had to go back to the Sophia hotel, Jos to establish the truth regarding status of Ahmed and Aminu, against the back drop of the claims that they had earlier attacked and robbed a guest in the hotel and were fleeing from the police.

Incidentally, the Sophia Hotel proprietor is the same Mr. David Sule who is not only the master of Ahmed, but had earlier revealed that he actually sent him along with Aminu to go and fetch police so as to arrest the people that had invaded his house in the search of the said Mike.

When the issue of whether the hotel was actually attacked that night by armed robbers, Mr. simply said: "that is a white lie that can only be told by the police to cover up their atrocities".

Mr Sule's response was similarly corroborated by the Director of Jos-based league for Human Rights, Mr Nankin Bagudu who himself said he has concluded his investigations into the matter and discovered the police stories leave much to be desired.

So who could be telling the truth between the police, the deceased's parents and the other key witnesses who said they saw the event live? In his petition on behalf of the families of Chief Mohammed (Onu of Igala in Jos) and Alhaji Masala, to the state commissioner of police, the director of league for human rights, said, "we are saddened we are writing on behalf of the deceased families who were summarily executed on the

6<sup>th</sup> of February 2006 (he meant 2007) by Yusuf Dogoyaro, CSP, DPO, Anglo Jos police station on the night of February, 6 2007".

Mr Bagudu declared that because the family and the general public were dissatisfied with the way police have handled the investigation, there was the need to order a judicial commission of inquiry and full investigation into the matter.

The petition, dated February 13, 2007 and entitled, "Appeal for Judicial Commission of Inquiry and full investigation against the extra judicial, arbitrary and summary execution of Ahmed Sadiq Mohammed and Aminu Musa by Yusuf Dogonyaro CSP the DPO of Anglo Jos police station on February 6, 2007," also copied both Attorney General of the Federation and that of Plateau State, along with the speaker of the state house of assembly among others.

"Findings by the family, have increasingly showed that there is more to it than meets the eye. Further family accounts regarding the statuses of the deceased youths, the human rights activist stressed, indicate that the deceased people were not armed robbers but were on errand by the time they were shot by the police DPO. Ahmed Sadiq is a professional driver working with David Sule, owner of Sohpiea Tourist Hotel, Jos, Kaduna, and Markurdi while late Aminu Musa was a trader," he stressed.

"The DPO who was just passing by in a mufti Bagudu's petition furthered alleged, came to the scene and upon inquiry, decided that since they (Ahmed and Aminu) were driving an expensive car, they may likely be thieves. He ordered a sergeant with the Rapid Response Squad to shoot the two boys the two boys who were unconscious. The sergeant refused and collected the gun and ordered those around to move back. He fired and killed instantly the two boys, after which he dragged their bodies on the ground, and took them to Anglo Jos police station, where they were displayed for the public to see," Bagudu narrated.

According to the human rights activist, the families of the deceased, however, followed up the matter and were later to see the corpses of their loved ones at the Jos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH), where they were "deposited by the DPO as accident victims".

The puzzle therefore is, how come the same persons earlier dubbed armed robbers were later recorded as accident victims at the hospital? Or, is the police trying to cover up something? Could these have framed up the same manner some innocent Nigerians of Igbo stock were murdered by the police in 2005 and framed as armed robbers in the legendary "Apo Six" episode?

Another question begging for answer is, why did the sergeant rebuff the order of his superior DPO when asked to kill the boys, if truly they were robbers? And why did the DPO do it himself and allegedly threatened further to equally shoot an air force sergeant who dared question the DPO's order or action? If the DPO was sure the young men were truly armed robbers, why turn around to describe them as accident victim at LUTH, where he was said to have dumped their corpses? How true is the police story that some dangerous weapons such as, a pistol, a knife, a cutlass and a long stick that cannot even enter their car, were all found on the deceased youths? Or, are the weapons merely planted by the police not only to set them up, but just to buttress their resolve to incriminate the youths, contrary to the claims of the living witnesses who earlier they only found a gallon and a spare tyre in the car when they had search it?

But what will be the gain of the eye witnesses in trying to hide or shield such facts of the pistol, cutlass, knife, etc finds, in the car of deceased youths, if they police story is anything to go by? These certainly, are valid areas or questions that must be cleared if the truth about the incident must be established.

This is particularly against the backdrop of the overwhelming and weighty evidences of key witnesses, who according to Bagudu, were not less than 14.

"Since the incident, the DPO insisted Bagudu, "has reported been threatening the family of the deceased and are saying they are going to deal with the family of the deceased in addition to what they have done to their sons." So, why the threats? To further cover up their tracks?

However, the gory incident if proven that the police was wrong, has again brought to the fore the sad tale the Nigerian whose personnel take delight in terminating the lives of those they are paid and obliged to protect, which truly shows that human life or dignity means little or nothing to them.