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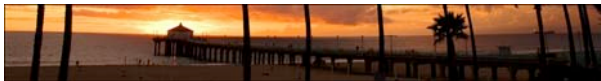
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Nigeria: Policemen Kill Okada Rider at Karu

Abubakar Yakubu and Nathaniel Jonah

5 April 2010

The police in Karu, an Abuja suburb Thursday allegedly killed a commercial motorcyclist as he ferried passengers on the Jikoyi to Karu road.

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Witnesses said at about 8 pm on the fateful day, Usman Ibrahim was carrying a passenger on his bike when four policemen manning a checkpoint signalled with a touchlight that he stop, but that he continued on his way.

One of the policemen reportedly hit him on the back of the head and that he died shortly on hitting the ground.

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Over 20 motorcycles were impounded and 10 commercial cyclists arrested as suspects by the police at Karu.

The deceased's uncle, Malam Hassan Ibrahim, said Usman came to Abuja from Jibia in Katsina State to work hard in order to help his parents and to fulfil his dream of marrying his fiancée before the year ran out.

"His parents are deaf and dumb, which made Usman the breadwinner of his family and he worked very hard as an Okada rider to ensure that he makes them comfortable and to marry before the year runs out," his uncle said.

Mallam Ibrahim stated that he was outside his apartment Thursday night (at around 12 midnight) when some commercial cyclists came to him and inquired whether Usman had come home as they saw his motorcycle parked at CBN junction in Karu.

He said immediately after the information, he left with a group of Islamic clerics to CBN junction and did not see the bike, adding that the following morning they went to the police station at Karu and were told that Usman was at Asokoro General Hospital.

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"When we got to the hospital, a check was done of all the patients that were admitted for the day but Usman's name could only be found on the list of corpses at the hospital, which made us return to the police to ask for a medical report but they preferred to release a policeman to follow us to the hospital to get the corpse," the uncle said.

According to him, the police removed N2,320 from the deceased pocket to deposit for the corpse at the hospital, while the family paid N2,660 and an additional N500, before the body was released from the hospital.

He said prayers were conducted after Jumat prayers and the corpse taken to Nyanya Cemetery for burial.

Mallam Ibrahim disclosed that the attack on Usman by the police was the third, adding that the first was when they whipped him with sticks and he fell with a female passenger, who was carrying tomatoes, while the third was when he got

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the same beating when he carried a male passenger.

Our reporter learnt from people around CBN junction that policemen, who mount road blocks at CBN junction, are found of molesting commercial cyclists as from 8 pm.

"They use heavy sticks to hit cyclists, who refuse to stop and we normally see ugly incidents, where cyclists and their passengers get injured because of such harassment," a witness around the area said.

Cyclists spoken to alleged that the policemen are found of extorting money from them, hence their refusal to stop.

"Once we stop at CBN junction, the policemen will collect all our earnings for the day, which is normally N2,500 and later take your bike to their station where we are made to pay additional N3,000 before the bike is released, hence our refusal to stop," an Okada rider revealed.

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He said because of the extortion, commercial cyclists prefer to by-pass the policemen that mount roadblock at the junction.

Residents of Karu said the services of okada riders have been helpful as they take them home after work.

"After the holdup at AYA, we normally mount such bikes at 8 pm and they drop us at the door steps of our houses," a resident said.

Reacting FCT Police Spokesman, Superintendent Moshood Jimoh, said the police sighted the victim disobeying the FCTA's ban and waved him to stop but he sped on and hit a pole.

"After the accident, the policemen at the scene took him to Asokoro General Hospital and surprisingly the victim's colleagues came in large numbers to burn a police outpost and 10 of them were arrested," the spokesman said.

He said the suspects will be investigated and later charged to court.

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