

Lafia inmates killed themselves while sharing stolen money –Comptroller

Written by Hir Joseph, Lafia
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The two inmates who died at the Lafia prison in Nasarawa State, did not die from torture, but from skirmishes which broke out among them during the sharing of a huge sum of cash they stole from the safe at the facility, state Comptroller of Nigeria Prisons Service (NPS), Kunle Sanusi, said yesterday.

When Daily Trust sought his reaction to allegations that inmates had during breakfast returned their rations in protest over the death of the two inmates, the comptroller insisted that “they ate their food all.

“They ate breakfast and lunch,” he said, insisting that there was no hunger strike by any inmate at the facility.

The two inmates, Musa Aliyu and Godwin Francis – all on awaiting trial list - died two days after inmates at the facility attempted a jailbreak, claiming they were protesting meagre ration. The demonstrators also allegedly broke a safe at the facility and stole large sums of cash. Counsel to the two deceased, Barrister Usman Mohammed Elegu, alleged on Tuesday that his clients were tortured to death by prisons officers after the failed jailbreak.

But the comptroller yesterday gave his own side of the story: “They stole money; it was much money. They stole in bulk from the safe. So when they were sharing, they fought and some of them sustained injuries.

“Some fell from the fence while they were attempting escape. You know our fence is very high. The doctors’ report said some of them fell awkwardly. So they were unconscious, and were taken to the hospital. They died from these, not torture. Nobody tortured anybody. In fact, when they were protesting, we stood outside, and only shot in the air, to stall any escape. They bored a hole through the fence but could not escape because we were shooting. We shot some of them in the legs, but we did not kill anybody,” Kunle Sanusi said.

The comptroller displayed a medical report, saying doctors at the Dalhatu Specialist Hospital (DASH) checked the corpses of the two deceased, confirming they did not die from torture.

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He confirmed the lawyer's report that prisons authorities had denied him access to their clients after he gathered that they were beaten to unconsciousness. "Nobody tortured them. they were truly unconscious, but it was because they fell, and you know they fought themselves during sharing of the money they stole. We did not allow anybody to see them because they were on the hospital bed, unconscious.