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## Okada riders at mercy of robbers in Sokoto

By Abubakar Auwal, Sokoto | Publish Date: Jul 17 2016 5:00AM

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Some Okada riders at the entrance of Sokoto Central Market

Sokoto is known to be the most peaceful state in the country as a result of which people from neighbouring states and countries troop there for

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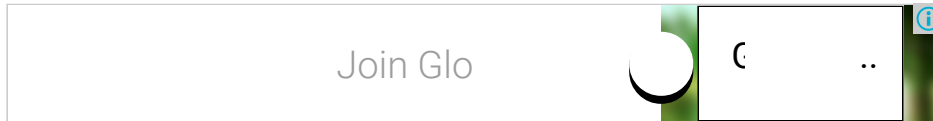
A significant number of these people engage in commercial motorcycle operation. The Okada or Achaba business, as it is called is one of the most readily available business and this is because most commuters use that mode of transportation due to the lack of a mass transit system and adequate taxi service in the state.



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However, the rising cases of motorcycle (Okada) snatching and killing of the operators in the state may force many of the operators out of the business.

The snatchers, Daily Trust on Sunday gathered disguise as passengers only to attack their victims when they get to lonely or deserted areas.

Yusuf Lawal, a commercial motorcyclist was hired on April, 7 at about 9:30pm by one Murtala Adamu of Rarah village in Rabah Local Government Area of the state for a trip to Rabah fadama site. On reaching the destination, it was gathered that Adamu brought out a knife and attacked Lawal, inflicting serious injuries on him.

Witnesses said members of the vigilante group in the area rescued the victim and assisted in the arrest of Murtala, whom they handed over to the police for investigation.

Just a week after that incident, another motorcyclist, Anas Ibrahim, was attacked. He was hit by his passenger, one Yusuf Bello, who wanted to snatch his motorcycle but for the quick intervention of passersby, who arrested the suspect and took him to the nearest police station.


Similarly, one Nura Alhaji Yaro of Helele area was arrested on the 28th of June, for attempting to slit the throat of an Okada operator whom he had hired to take him to the Diplomat area within the state metropolis.





Although, he did not succeed, the Okada rider, Salisu Usman of Gidan Dare area sustained severe injuries in the neck.

The same Yaro was alleged to have beheaded a commercial motorcyclist after snatching his motorcycle along Sokoto Cinema road on the same day. Prior to that incident, on June 22, a commercial motorcyclist named Abdullahi Lawali of Rijiyar Shehu area, picked one Sani Abdullahi (aka Usi) of Argungu Local Government Are of Kebbi State. They were going to the Iman School at Arkilla area, but Daily Trust on Sunday, gathered that on getting to the Kaura Malam Garba area, the "passenger" stopped the rider with the intention of snatching his motorcycle.

The motorcyclist raised alarm and Abdullahi along with his gang members were arrested.

Another Okada operator, Sama'ila Haruna, said they were terrified by the development but that because it is their only source of livelihood, they have to remain in the business. He said as a Muslim, he believes in the power of prayers, which he offers every morning before going out for business.


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He said there is no specific time for the attacks, as the criminals could strike at any time of the day. He added that because of that development, they have stopped taking passengers to deserted areas.

He said the snatchers have formed a syndicate, and that members are always waiting at strategic position to assist.

“On reaching there they would use a chain or cable to strangle the motorcyclist and run away with his motorcycle. Some have survived the attack but others have not been so lucky”, he said.

Another Okada operator who identified himself as Yusuf said he stopped operating in the night because of the risk.

Shamsudeen Aliyu, the treasurer of the Amalgamated Commercial Motorcycle Owners and Riders Association of Nigeria (Kabu-Kabu), described the development as worrisome, saying that they were working with security agencies to address the problem.

He said they had set up a security committee which was monitoring the movement of their members in the worst hit areas.

He said the motorcycle thieves sometimes used charms and tricks to rob Okada riders. He recalled a recent incident involving one of their members who was given N500 by a passenger and instantly lost his consciousness after which the passenger ran away with the motorcycle.

He advised their members to always pray before going out and not to trust anyone. He also advised them against taking passengers to remote and deserted places.

He commended the police for their efforts towards arresting the thieves and recovering stolen motorcycles in the state.

“We are very thankful to the police because they have been arresting the attackers and recovering our motorcycles,” he said.

Addressing a press conference, the state Commissioner of Police, Alhaji Salisu Fagge, said the police were working hard to arrest criminality including motorcycle snatching in the state.

Parading some suspected motorcycle and car snatchers, Fagge said they would leave no stone unturned in ridding the state of criminals, adding that his men were working 24 hours to maintain law and order.

He reiterated that policing was everyone’s business and called on the public to report any suspicious movement in their areas. He also warned residents against taking the law into their hands.

Fagge also urged commercial motorcycle operators in the state to be security conscious and to avoid operating during odd hours.

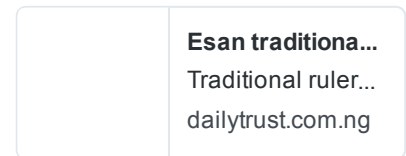
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