

Horror! Okada Riders Kill Colleague

• Say He Was A Thief For Failing To Settle His Boss



The suspects

They left their states, Adamawa and Benue for Lagos in search of greener pastures. But they have found themselves in police cell over an alleged murder of a colleague.

BY ONYEDIKA AGBEDO

FOR many Nigerians, commercial motorcyclists popularly known as Okada are a special set of people to be feared. Those who hold this view contend that while they provide an indisputable service to the masses, they often carry on like a set of frustrated people who can misbehave at any point in time.

While this may not be totally true, certain actions of the motorcyclists tend to lend credence to the view. Always in a hurry, they are prone to indiscipline and acts of lawlessness which always land them in regrettable circumstances.

This explains the agony of five okada riders who are presently cooling off in the cell at the State Criminal Investigations Department (SCID) Panti, Yaba over allegations of murder. Iyaya Usman, 18; Sunday Akacha, 23; Aliyu Mustapha 19; Dauda Kwada, 22 and Buka Ibrahim 26 have been in police custody since June 30 for allegedly beating one of their colleagues to death. The deceased, one Elisha Zira suffered the cruel fate for allegedly disappearing with his motorcycle for two weeks without making a daily remittance of N500 to the owner, one Emmanuel John, (alias 1004) who is now at large.

The suspects, all from Michika Local Council of Adamawa State except Sunday, who said he hails from Benue State, used to ply the

Obalende-Ikoyi axis on daily basis to eke out a living. However, that is no longer to be, at least until they absolve themselves of the allegations against them.

Narrating the circumstances that led to the death of the deceased to *The Guardian*, Friday Zini who reported the matter to the police said the deceased was tortured to death by the owner of the machine (1004) and the suspects for failing to give account of his stewardship to his master for three days.

"We are all from Adamawa State and Elisha is my brother. He had been riding the motorcycle for 1004 for over five months and had been paying him on daily basis all along. But just because he did not pay for three days, 1004 ordered a manhunt for him. They found him on the road, arrested him with the police, later bailed him with their own money and decided to torture him to death. To do this, they tied him on the legs and arms and beat him to their satisfaction with every available weapon they could lay their hands on. Still undone, they used plier to remove his nails. Eventually, he couldn't withstand the pain and gave up and I had to look for the police when I learnt about this," he said.

Usman told *The Guardian* that he joined in the beating believing that the deceased was a thief.

"The boy ran away with 1004's motorcycle for two weeks without making his daily remittance of N500 to him. So he (1004) said we should help him to look for him and we started searching for him.

"A few days after, one of our colleagues found him at Bar Beach where he was smoking hemp. He quickly went to the Bar Beach Police Station and got some policemen who got him arrested. He then went and told 1004 who went to the station with some of his friends to secure his bail. It was from there that they brought him to Osborne Estate where a lot of commercial motorcyclists used to wash their motorcycle and we all joined in beating him. They started beating him and we joined when they said he was a thief for failing to settle his boss."

Usman said: "They tied him with a naked cable and we used sticks to beat him. All of us were there and participated in the beating."

He however, denied involvement in the removal of the deceased's nails. "None of us was there when 1004 and some other people removed his nails with a plier. We only participated in beating him, after which we left the place," he said regrettably.

His fellow sojourners in the cell made similar confessions but a

remorseful Ibrahim who claimed he was a mechanic and not a commercial motorcyclist told *The Guardian* that if he knew that participating in the beating would lead to the death of the deceased and eventually land him in the cell, he wouldn't have done so.

"I am a mechanic and not an Okada man. If you come to my workshop and I am not there, it is either I have closed for the day and gone home or I have gone to Obalende market to buy something. I got involved in this because 1004 is my friend but we did not know he was going to die. If we did, none of us would have touched him. So many of the people who took part in torturing the boy to death have run away. Not even 1004 has been nabbed but we have been here since, suffering because of him," he lamented.

Further investigations by *The Guardian* revealed that the suspects were members of an informal group of Adamawa commercial motorcyclists based in Ikoyi. Named Michika Boys, they have a strong affinity and meet frequently. Sources said that it was during such gathering that the search for the deceased was ordered.

However, detectives attached to the homicide section of the SCID, Panti, have swung into action in search of other accomplices in the murder. A senior police officer in the section confided in *The Guardian* under condition of anonymity that efforts were on top gear to get the key suspects (1004) and his other cohorts arrested.

"We are still on with our investigations and that will definitely determine the fate of the suspects. We are working to get the key suspect, the owner of the motorcycle, arrested and I can assure you we will do that. For these ones, we will definitely charge them to court for conspiracy and murder and that is the price they have to pay for being involved in jungle justice," the officer said.