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## Sorrow, tears, death in robbers' siege in Lagos

- o Lagosians express worries over the throes of dare-devil robbers in the metropolis

*By Seye Olumide, Bertram Nwannekanma and Isaac Taiwo*

The memories of terror unleashed by a gang of robbers to Chief Madu Obiora, a resident of Mureni Street, Isolo on Thursday, June 28 will still remain in his mind for a long time.

That day, the dare-devil numbering over 30 invaded the neighbourhood at night, maiming residents one after the other and raiding shops located on the Street.

Obiora, who only relocated a few weeks earlier to Isolo following his experience in the hands of robbers at Mafoluku Oshodi, could not believe he would fall victim again in so short a time.

However, he was a bit lucky this time unlike his previous experience, as the robbers only took his money without inflicting injuries on him and the family. The trauma has remained ever since such that he has threatened to abandon his family when they persuade him not to leave Lagos.

Frightened by the incident, Obiora had since left Lagos for fears that his attackers may be at it again.

Not even the assurances by security agents that the attack may be coincidental could make him stay back.

Today, he lives in Sagamu, where he comes to Lagos everyday to do business.

According to him, "I may not be twice lucky from the robbers".

While Obiora could be said to be lucky, his neighbour, Mr Kingsley Chikezie was not so fortunate, as he is nursing wounds in the hospital inflicted on him by the robbers.

Rehashing his experience to The Guardian yesterday, Chikezie said, he ran into the robbers who were raiding the shops on the street while returning from the eastern part of the country.

"The robbers had mistaken me for a security guard. I was pleading with them but when they saw my travel bag, they got convinced but not without beating me and snatching my bag", he said.

Another victim, Gbenga Olawole, heard some gunshots in the

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street on that fateful day at about 10.00 PM after watching the news on television. But as God would have it, the robbers did not come to his house.

According to him, "when I heard the sporadic gunshots, I quickly mobilized my family for prayers.

" We have heard about their menace and all they did at Mafoloku, Oshodi, Shogunle and Egbe-Ikotun area of the metropolis and we were terrified. Nobody was willing to wait and experience such terror. We thank God that they did not enter our house that night since we were on the next street".

Yet another victim, whose shop was broken into by the robbers said she had kept some money preparatory to going to market the following day, but when she came in the morning, the door of her shop has been broken.

The victim, who gave her name simply as Alhaja Sikuriat said apart from the money, some valuable items, were carted away by the robbers.

The experience of Mureni residents was a reflection of what many Lagosians have suffered from robbers in recent times.

Incidences of bank and bus robberies popularly known as one chance abound in the metropolis.

Unsuspecting victims have been attacked in many areas, including hospitals and even sacred places of worship such as churches and mosques.

The dare-devil robbers find it easy to operate in every part of the state and what people are lamenting the state of insecurity.

- Two weeks ago, a 21 years old lady was killed by a stray bullet from two armed robbers who operated on a motor-bike along Ikotun-Egbeda Road.

An eyewitness told The Guardian that the robbery gang stormed Egbeda by surprise after attacking and robbing the occupants of a Sport Utility Van (SUV), which they trailed from a distance.

He said: "After robbing the occupants, the two robbers started shooting sporadically with their automatic rifles to scare away people and elude the security agents.

"There was great confusion among hundreds of people around, as everybody tried to escape.

"The robbers drove towards Iyana-Ipaja and Ponle bus stop before veering into a nearby street.

"The lady on hearing the shooting and the pandemonium that ensued, rushed out to see what was happening only to be hit by a stray bullet on the head and she died on the spot", he added.

In similar circumstances, residents and motorists along Ikotun-Egbe-Isolo Road have expressed concern over the incessant cases of robbery at Pako Bus stop in Oke-Afa area of Isolo.

Robbers in recent times had capitalised on the perennial traffic snarl in the area to rob motorists trapped in traffic.

Many of the victims were forced to abandon their vehicles and belongings on the road to escape from the robbers.

Last week, a 10-man robbery gang raided motorists at the same spot, carting away belongings of fleeing motorists.

A female victim, Foluke Aina told The Guardian that her mobile hand set, which she bought for N25, 000, in addition to N40, 000 cash and the robbers stole other valuables abandoned during the raid.

○ It was also the turn of a bank located on Medical Road, Ikeja, two weeks ago, where no fewer than six people were killed when the dare-devil robbers invaded the bank and made away with an undisclosed amount of money.

In what seemed as a vote of no confidence following the terror unleashed on some Lagosians by armed bandits, residents are now calling on Government to legalise the use of guns by individuals to ensure self-defence.

"When they know that others too are carrying guns, they would be afraid to attack anyone because they would not know what kind of encounter they would meet", Sam Odion said yesterday.

A trader, Vivian Orgi described the situation as a shame for the nation that cannot provide enough security for its citizens.

According to her, "when the two men on the bike attacked the SUV car, we were initially wondering what was happening until they started shooting. They were young boys of between 23 to 25 years but deadly in the act".

Apart from the young lady that was killed, many other people sustained injuries while trying to escape.

But the acting Inspector-General of Police (IGP), Mr. Mike Okiro during his recent visit to the Lagos State Governor, Babatunde Fashola over the security situation in the state has promised to tackle the situation in the metropolis.

The visit was a welcome development to Lagosians following the rate of armed robbery attacks and are waiting to see a change in the state.

However, residents who are not willing to toy with their lives had been mobilizing themselves into vigilante groups to counter the menace of the robbers.

The governor, who was also worried by the trend had set up a committee headed by former Inspector- General of Police, Alhaji Musliu Smith.

The committee was to come out with recommendations on how best to tackle security problems in the metropolis.

While the police have sent officials to some designated black spots in the metropolis especially at night to curb the menace, Alhaji Smith's headed committee has swooped into action, arresting over 100 hoodlums believed to pose security risk in the state.

Lagosians now hope that all these efforts will materialise in good time to save them from the menace of armed robbers who terrorized them even in broad day light.

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