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BUSINESS SERVICES

Wednesday, December 03, 2008

Court jails policeman for killing businessman

From Niyi Bello, Akure

FOR the killing of one Mufutau Alejelowo, an Akure-based businessman early this year at a police check point along the Akure-Ilesa road, a policeman has been sentenced to seven-year imprisonment by an Akure High Court and dismissed from the Force.

The imprisonment and the dismissal of Constable Oyebanji Oluniyi, formerly attached to the Ondo Police Command, came in the heels of reported killing of two persons by policemen in Idanre last Friday in similar circumstances.

Although Oluniyi was initially being tried for murder, which carries a death sentence, the matter was later reduced to manslaughter after arguments and counter arguments by both the prosecuting and defence counsel at the court presided over by Justice Ademola Bola.

According to the prosecuting counsel, Ife Olorunfemi, Oluniyi was among policemen that mounted a road block near Ero, along the Ilesa road where Alejelowo, a dealer in automobiles was one of the occupants of a vehicle that was stopped by the team.

After an initial encounter, the team was said to have asked the driver of the vehicle to proceed but he was later shouted at to stop for reasons not immediately disclosed to either the driver or the other occupants.

The refusal of the driver to stop at that point led the trigger-happy Constable to aim his rifle and shot at the vehicle and the bullet reportedly pierced the boot of the car and hit Alejelowo from the back causing instant death.

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In a related development, two persons were convicted by another Akure High Court for the murder of their friend on February 9, 2006 and were subsequently ordered to be hanged by the state.

The two persons to have a date with the hangman are Messrs Mustafa Tijani and Omoniyi Oladiran who in the course of an argument on the fateful day killed their friend, Gbenga Ojo.

The both men were charged with conspiracy, murder contrary to section 316 and punishable under section 319 of the laws of Ondo State, 1978. Although they denied the charges preferred against them, through their counsel, the court was able to establish their culpability in Ojo's murder.

In a moving statement before the death pronouncement on the convicted persons, the presiding Judge, Justice Williams Akintoroye, said "on the day of evil and destruction, may the Lord God hide us in his pavilion. For late Gbenga Ojo, on February 9, 2006 was an evil day. A day of destruction that was gloomy.

"If he had known all these about that day, may be he would have done something to help himself. He might not have stepped out of his hiding place, if he had been fore-warned. Alas! Gbenga Ojo took a walk down the road that fateful evening, and never returned home. He ended up in the mortuary."

During the trial, the prosecuting counsel, Olorunfemi, who incidentally prosecuted the case of the killer-cop, called five witnesses, including the doctor that carried out the post-mortem on the body of the deceased and the policeman that investigated the murder.

The prosecution was able to establish that contrary to section 319 (1) cap 30 Vol. 11 of the State Law, 1978, the deceased was killed by the two accused persons during a fracas in a public place in Ondo town. He was also able to proof that the accused persons hit the deceased with a heavy object that resulted in his death.

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