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Uproar as soldier kills two in Warri

Thursday, 12 December 2013 16:13

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Category: Metro

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• **Families petition military high command and Inspector General of Police, demand justice**

THE alleged killing of a commercial cyclist, Efe Ewugharodo, 32, and an innocent passer-by, Felix Adjeke, 37, a security man with the Warri Refining and Petrochemical Company Ltd, by a trigger-happy soldier in Ughelli, Delta State, is generating tension, even as the families of the deceased have petitioned the military high command and the Inspector General of Police, seeking a probe into the killings.

Both men were allegedly felled by bullets from the same soldier.

While Ewugharodo was killed on the spot, Felix Adjeke was unfortunate to have been in the background, when Ewugharodo was shot at. He was killed by a stray bullet.

It was gathered that at about 7.45a.m. on Thursday, December 5, 2013, some soldiers attached to 222 Battalion, Agbarha-Otor, providing security for Setraco Nigeria Limited, which is constructing a bridge by the Ughelli Main Market, blocked a section of the road to dissuade vehicles and motorcycles from accessing the road.

The inexplicable blockade of the road by the soldiers caused heavy traffic build-up.

In the ensuing confusion, the victim, Ewugharodo, was beaten by a soldier to the extent that he fell from his motorcycle. The victim, subsequently, demanded to know from the said soldier why such inhuman treatment was meted out on him. The incident drew the attention of other soldiers who joined in beating the victim.

A soldier then emerged from nowhere and shot the victim twice on the chest and forehead, and the victim slumped and died on the spot.

The victim was thereafter taken by the soldiers in their Pick-Up van to the

premises of the Nigeria Police, "A" Division, and Ughelli from where his corpse was deposited at the morgue of the Central Hospital, Ughelli.

The Guardian learnt that when Efe was being shot by the soldier, Felix Adjeke, who was taking his two children to school, was also hit by a stray bullet and was taken by the soldiers to the premises of Setraco Nigeria Ltd., along Ughelli/Patani Road, Ughelli, where he died. He was subsequently taken to the Central Hospital, Ughelli where the corpse was deposited.

Both victims were married with three children each, it was learnt.

The ruthless murder of the two men drew immense condemnation from all who witnessed the incident, especially traders at the Ughelli Market, who on the day of the killings, locked up their stores in protest against the killings.

Also, on Wednesday, a human rights group, the Forum for Justice and Human Rights Defence, (FJHD) condemned the extra-judicial murder of the duo.

The Commander of the 222 Battalion, Lt. Col. Victor Ibeh, said Ewugharodo was shot when he tried to disarm a soldier.

But the National Coordinator of the FJHD, Oghenejabor Ikimi, said Ibeh's allegation was both an afterthought and an attempt by the military to sweep the matter under the carpet, which "we hope to resist in the law court."

He said: "In the light of the degree of impunity and indiscipline exhibited by the above soldiers in the public, we call on the Army authorities in the state to fish out the said erring soldiers for possible court martial and their subsequent handover to the Police authorities in the state for investigation and prosecution for murder to serve as a deterrent to other blood-thirsty soldiers as we are not in a jungle where might is right."



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