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Soldier kills okada rider in Ughelli

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By **Sunday Apah** - Ughelli

Soldiers attached to Setraco Construction Company, which is working on the Ughelli Township Road on Thursday morning shot dead a middle-aged commercial motorcycle operator popularly known as 'okada'.

It was gathered that trouble started when the soldiers in charge of guarding one of the Lebanese issued an order banning all vehicular movements, excluding motorcycles conveying school children across the bridge to enable ongoing construction work by the company on the bridge.

According to an okada rider, who witnessed the incident, "following the ban by the soldiers, the okada rider carrying a female passenger passed the barricade setup by the soldiers; midway into the bridge, he was asked by one of the soldiers to reverse.

"The okada rider said since he was already midway into the bridge, the soldier should allow him pass. While the conversation was going on, the infuriated soldier flogged the okada rider with his horsewhip. In reaction to being whipped by the soldiers, he alighted from his motorcycle and in the process of taking off his helmet, hit the soldier in the arm.

"Seeing this as an attack on him, the soldier cocked his rifle and threatened to shoot; the okada rider protested by holding the rifle and prevented the soldier from shooting. On sighting what was happening, another soldier fired at the okada rider in the chest, this failed to penetrate".

He added, "On realising the gravity of the incident, another shot was fired at the okada rider in the head, which killed him immediately and a bystander at the scene simply identified as Felix was also hit by stray bullet on the side".

As at the time of filing this report, the bystander was reported to be in critical condition.

When this reporter visited the scene as at 9a.m., the corpse of the Okada rider had been taken to the morgue in one of the vans of the company and his motorcycle taken to the Ughelli Police Station. More soldiers have been mobilised to the scene with movement in the area reduced to the barest minimum with some few passersby seen moving across the bridge with their hands held up high under the watchful eyes of the soldiers present.

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer, Delta State, Lucky Uyabeme, confirmed the story, saying that he was briefed that the dead okada rider struggled with the soldier and the gun exploded which led to his death.

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