

Jungle justice: Tipper driver hacked to death for the sin of another man

• His vehicle set ablaze

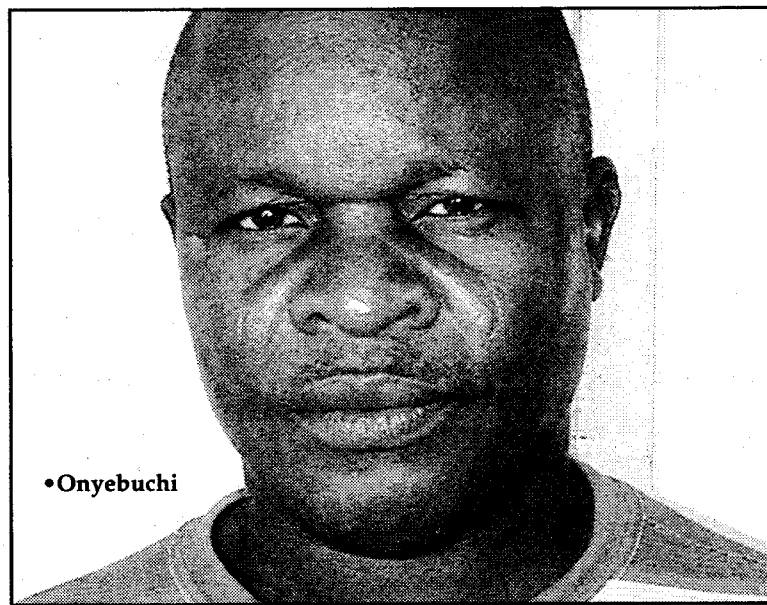


• The late Wasiu



• The burnt truck

Crime **n** other stories



• Onyebuchi

THE Police at Zone 2 headquarters, Onikan, Lagos, are trying to unravel the circumstances surrounding the death of a lorry driver allegedly lynched by some hoodlums at Idele, a community in Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area, Ogun State.

The incident was said to have occurred on Sokoto Road in the village on Thursday, April 17, 2011 after a truck allegedly knocked down a five-year-old boy and he died instantly while the driver escaped with the vehicle.

Unfortunately for the victim, identified simply as Wasiu, sympathisers were still gathered at the spot when he arrived the scene in the lorry popularly called tipper with registration number XJ 175 KTU. Some hoodlums among the sympathisers then accosted him and accused him of being responsible for the five-year-old boy's death.

They ordered him to alight from the tipper and asked him why he killed the little boy.

Surprised at the question, he told them he was not the one who hit the boy. Then one man, who was

alleged to be the leader of the hoodlums, and his assistant (names withheld) allegedly ordered the mob to kill the tipper driver to serve as a lesson to other reckless drivers in the area.

After hacking the innocent driver to death, the hoodlums were said to have set the tipper ablaze before they retired into their hideout in a nearby bush, where they normally hid themselves after committing such atrocities.

Informed on the phone that the driver of his vehicle had been killed and the vehicle had been set ablaze for allegedly killing a five-year-old boy, the owner of the tipper, Chief Ephraim Oyeibuchi, drove to Atan Police Station, from where he went to the scene in company with the investigating police officer and some other policemen from the division.

He said he saw two of the principal suspects at the scene and one of them boasted that he was the one who ordered his boys to force

the tipper driver to alight from the vehicle before he was killed with a machete. He was also said to have claimed responsibility for the burning of the tipper.

Onyebuchi said: "On that day, somebody called me on the phone and told me that a vehicle had killed a small boy and escaped, and that when the mob could not locate the errant driver, they transferred their anger to an innocent tipper driver and killed him with a machete."

"They slashed his body till he died and came back from their hideout in a *danfo* bus some hours later to set the tipper ablaze."

"Even when I got there, their leader boasted that he was the one who ordered his boys to kill the driver and set the tipper ablaze. He even threatened to set my jeep ablaze before I managed to leave the scene."

"We could not even tow the burnt tipper to the police station that day for fear of the hoodlums who had taken advantage of the ugly situation to cause mayhem on Sokoto Road, and even the hoodlums later entered the town, wounding some people and destroying their properties."

"I later heard that the Public Relations Officer of the Tipper Owners

Association petitioned the Inspector General of Police who ordered the police zonal headquarters (Zone II) Onikan Lagos to investigate the matter."

"While I was earlier told that 14 people had been arrested over the matter, I was surprised to hear later that 11 of them had been released, including Owuoye and One Hour. I wonder why, as the owner of the tipper set ablaze by the hoodlum, I was side tracked. Up till now, I do not know who and who were charged to court or what the charges against them are. I also wonder why the principal suspects were not charged to court."

"When I got to the Federal SARS office at Adeniji Adele, Lagos, I was allowed to see the Commissioner of Police in charge of Federal Anti Robbery Squad, Mr. Mark A. Idakwo, and he told me that it is not all cases there that are handled by Federal SARS and that he was not aware of any such case being taken to court by his office."

"I went to Zone 2, Onikan, Lagos to continue my fact finding mission. When I met the Police Public Relations Officer of the Zonal Command, Mr. Ken Odigwe, an Assistant Superin-

tendent of Police, he called the Public Relations Officer of the Tipper Association, Atan, Ogun State, and he promised to come to Onikan Lagos the following day, which was Tuesday, to explain how the matter was going and to know which police command investigated and charged the case to court as well as the court where it was taken to."

Asked what he wanted about the case, Onyebuchi said: "First, I don't know why I was side-tracked. As the owner of the burnt tipper, I am supposed to know which police is investigating the matter, when it was charged to court, who and who were charged to court, why 11 suspects were not charged to court. Which money are they sharing? Who brought money and who and who were sharing money?"

"Are their fake complainants trying to hijack the case? Why were the family members of Wasiu, the deceased driver, and myself, the owner of the tipper, not carried along? Why is somebody telling me that there is a powerful chairman or president in Atan who can make life uncomfortable for me if I report anybody to the police? That amounts to a threat to my life."

"I want the police to investigate the hijackers of this case, if it is true that the case has gone to court without the complaints, to explain why the main complainants are not carried along; it is also interesting to know whether it was a calculated plan to frustrate the case, as it may be struck out if the court finds that those in court were not the genuine complainants. I want to see that an autopsy is carried out on the murdered tipper driver."

"I want to know also why the two principal suspects were not charged to court."

However, on Wednesday the association's Public Relations Officer in Atan town (name withheld) was with the Zonal Police Public Relations Officer, ASP Odigwe, and told him that the petition they wrote was with the zone (as revealed by the zonal PPRO on phone), thereby ending the search to locate where the case is being handled.