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•Agaba's relations

Pain, anguish pervade Oyo communities

Posted by: OSEHEYE OKWUOFU in Southwest 🕒 11 hours ago

In about two months, six commercial motorcyclists have been murdered in Ibadan, the Oyo State capital. They are allegedly killed by criminals who posed as customers, OSEHEYE OKWUOFU reports.

Of late, no fewer than six motorcycle operators popularly called okada riders have allegedly been killed by criminals who camouflage as customers. This is a recent phenomenon since the introduction of commercial motorcycle popularly known as okada as one of the means of transportation in Ibadan, the Oyo State capital.

Many people prefer boarding it to commercial buses and taxis. Their reason for its preference is its ability to ply narrow spaces, beat traffic and fastness. Added to these reasons is the joy of cool breeze that calms the nerves, especially during hot weather.

Notwithstanding its high rate of accidents, young and old see okada business as quick source of daily income, until recently when the operators became fear struck over the killings of members by armed men who thrive on okada theft.

Dotted many roads in the city are shocking discoveries of lifeless bodies, with severed limbs or heads in some cases.

A recent case was the discovery of a headless body in cold blood at Bembo Apata and a lifeless body with severed limbs at Bakatari areas of Ibadan. The two were commercial motor cycle operators who lost their okada and precious lives to robbers who boarded the motorcycles only to snatch them from the owners after killing them.

According to Mr. Taiwo Adisa, a commercial motorcycle operator who was at the scene of the discovery of

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the headless body at Bembo, Apata area of Ibadan, the victim was murdered in the early morning of the fateful day by his passenger who robbed him of his motorcycle and other belongings.

The victim, identified as a mechanic, used his okada to make brisk money early in the morning before going to his workshop.

"We saw him in his pool of blood there with cuts all over his body. The head was not there but some of his friends who are also okada operators were able to identify him through the clothes he wore.

"The okada has been snatched from him and maybe in the cause of struggling with his attacker and of course, knowing that if he escapes, he could identify him, the 'passenger' killed him. We have witnessed many cases like that when the passenger would suddenly turn to a robber and made away with the okada. And if the okada operator is lucky, he escapes unhurt, but if not, he might lose both his life and the okada.

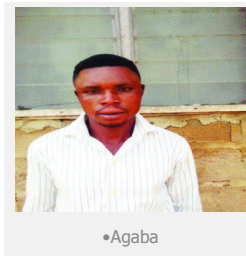
"The case involving the mechanic was very pathetic and shocking as it is unfortunate. In fact, our union has recently alerted members to be vigilant by not taking passengers to secluded places and deserted and quiet roads. We have a long list of cases of okada theft and killings.

It is so frightening now that some operators are considering leaving the business as a result of fear of their dear lives," Adisa said.

The police as at the time of filing this report have no clue on the gruesome killings and theft.

At Apata Police Station where the case was being handled, the police said investigation into the murder was ongoing.

A police officer at the station who confided with this reporter said the body has since been deposited at the state hospital mortuary, Ring Road, Ibadan.



•Agaba

The murder of Job Agaba, 31, on April 20, this year at Iyana Adeaga between Ilupeju and Orile areas of Ibadan is still fresh in the minds of residents of Bakatari. His dead body was sighted in a bush by a team of searchers at 7:00 p.m. the next day.

Our correspondent learnt that four other okada operators narrowly escaped death on the same spot where Agaba was murdered. They lost their motor cycles to the robbers.

Agaba, a native of Adiko in Obi Local Government Area of Benue State was described as a gentle and a loving husband who got married two months before he was mauled down by his assailants who made away

with his okada.

Daniel, a younger brother to Job narrated how his deceased brother left home and never returned.

"He used to ply Apata to Omi Adio to Bakatari route. He left home early morning of April 20, this year to work with his okada which was not up to two weeks when he bought it. We were all happy that morning, his wife, I and other members of the family had a good time. By 6:00 p.m., the time he usually returns from work, he was not at home.

"So, his wife started feeling unsettled and by 8:00 p.m. after all attempts to get him through his phone failed, we knew something has happened to him because it is not in his character to stay out late without calling his wife. That night, we could not sleep. We were busy contacting his friends, town's people in Ibadan and some close friends. The wife could not sleep throughout the night even though people around were consoling and assuring her that nothing bad happened to her husband.

"The next day, a search party went out looking for him. It was around 7:00 p.m. when they told us that his body was found at Adeaga area of Bakatari. We were shattered by the news and till now we cannot compose ourselves," he said.

Since the case was reported at Apata Police Station, no arrest has been made in connection with the murder.

The robbers have been described as a threat to the communities. A traditional ruler of the community, Balogun Olomi of Omi, Chief Mukaila Adebayo admitted that some reports have been lodged about the activities of the criminals who specialise in robbing and killing innocent people in the area. He listed the killing of Agaba and other three okada theft.

"I even heard that the deceased has been taken to his home town for burial. We got other two reports at Omi Adio and one at Bakatari where these people snatched okada from their owners. We have been educating okada operators to be vigilant and report any suspicious individual immediately to the police," he said.

The traditional ruler of Bakatari, the Olu of Bakatari, Chief Yekini Ajagbe Ayodele urged law enforcement agents to mount surveillance on the areas where the cases were reported.

On the part of the community, the traditional ruler explained that a monitoring team has been raised in addition to a vigilance group to track down the perpetrators of the heinous crime and ensure that they bring the killers of Agaba to justice.



•Agaba's father

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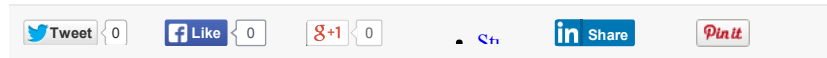
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He noted other pockets of cases of okada snatching and continued assaults on the operators.

We are not happy with the activities of these criminals; we want to sleep with our two eyes closed. We have asked people to help keep vigil at the scene where the criminals hide to commit this crime. We want to support the police as they make effort to flush out the perpetrators and ensure that the areas are safe for our people," the traditional ruler said.

As the people and the police collaborate to thwart the plan of the criminals, Oyo State Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Mr. Adekunle Ajisebutu assured the communities that all those involved in criminal activities would not go unpunished.



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