



Rival okada associations bicker over alleged attacks, killings

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The All Nigeria Autobike Commercial Owners and Riders Association (ANACOWA) has sent a distress call to the Ogun State Police Command, following alleged attacks on its members. The association claimed that several of its members have either been injured or killed during attacks by members of a rival association, Amalgamated Commercial Motorcycles Owners and Riders Association of Nigeria (ACOMORAN). The association claimed that some of its members in Sagamu area of the state, including one Daisi Olatunji, 32, Ife Omosola, 50, were attacked and killed by members of ACOMORAN. The allegations were, however, dismissed as contrived and unfounded by ACOMORAN and the police. In a petition forwarded to the Commissioner of Police, Ogun State Command, Abdulmajid Ali, the association alleged that chieftains of ACOMORAN connived with the police to harass and intimidate its members. The petition, dated May 6, 2016 and signed by the counsel to the association, Mobolaji Akintunde, reads: "Our attention has been drawn to the constant intimidation, harassment, attacks and threat to the lives of our clients by one Samsindeen Apelogun and members of ACOMORAN in flagrant disobedience and disregard of the judgment and orders of the High Court of Ogun State on June 28, 2012 and a Federal High Court sitting in Abeokuta on May 14, 2013. These people, with some assistance from unsuspecting police officers, have succeeded in subverting the judgment and orders of court. As a result of this judgment and our client's petition to the Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIG) Zone 2, in a letter dated August 9, 2012, the AIG Zone 2 directed that you use your offices to give all necessary protection to members of ANACOWA and ensure that the other association does not prevent members of ANACOWA from operating as ruled by the Ogun State High Court." The petition stated further that despite the two court orders, ACOMORAN chieftains have continuously impounded motorcycles belonging to ANACOWA's members and subjected them to further attacks leading to death in some instance. "At present, the motorcycles of our clients' members of ANACOWA that were seized for refusal of the owners to collect the daily tickets of ACOMORAN and AMORAN are in the custody of the Divisional Police Officer of Sagamu (Division), Ogun State." The petition added: "On June 18, 2013, Samsindeen Apelogun and members of ACOMORAN attacked our clients and members of ANACOWA, burning their offices and in the process killed one Saidi Adebisi, in flagrant disobedience of the judgment of the court." Dismissing the allegations as unfounded, the state Secretary of ACOMORAN, Comrade Kayode Showunmi, said ANACOWA was chasing shadow where there is none. He explained that only ACOMORAN and AMORAN were approved and recognised by the state government in order to moderate the activities of Okada riders in the state. "There were about seven different Okada riders associations, including ACOMORAN in Ogun State during the immediate past administration of Otunba Gbenga Daniel. While our association was the only Okada riders association registered with both the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), the then Federal Ministry of Transport and Works and Ogun State government, the other six associations only registered with CAC, Abuja. "In order to moderate the activities of Okada operators as a result of the rising rate of criminal activities associated with some

unidentified Okada operators, the state government decided to recognise and permit only ACOMORAN to operate in the state, while other splinter associations were suspended from operating in any part of the state. With the coming of the present administration in 2011, all the outlawed Okada associations rose up again and challenged the state government's suspension of their operation. They made spurious allegations that ACOMORAN was working for the Peoples Democratic Party(PDP) all in a bid to discredit us in vain. "The state government and Ogun House of Assembly later intervened by asking the splinter associations and ACOMORAN to present documents relating to our registration and found out that our association was the only one registered and approved by the federal, state and local governments, hence, we were asked to continue with our operation, while other splinter associations were asked to merge into one body called AMORAN, with an directive that the leadership of the new body should be rotated among the associations that formed the merger. Part of the intervention was that ACOMORAN and the new body AMORAN shall alternate collection of their dues and sale of tickets on a weekly basis." Continuing, he said:"We later learnt that ANACOWA pulled out of AMORAN several months after the merger, but the reason for their sudden exit from the body was not known to us since they are not part of ACOMORAN in the first place. "We are not saying that ANACOWA should not operate, but they must get the consent of both the state government and Ogun House of Assembly. Members of ACOMORAN are law abiding citizens and would not engage in any act of violence or cause mayhem in whatever form. As a matter of fact, we have been organising seminars and lectures for our teeming members on non-violent approach to their job in recent times. Therefore, it is not true that our members have been attacking members of the outlawed ANACOWA. On the contrary, their chieftains and members are the ones causing violence and dropping the name of our chieftains and association as masterminds." He added:"They attacked us but we didn't fight back because their intention was to cause violence so that the state government can ban our association from operating in the state. I want to advise them (ANACOWA) not to disturb our operation during the week allotted to us by the state government. The state government through the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) generates revenue from our operation and if ANACOWA members disturb us , they will by extension disturb the state government from generating revenue through our activities." The state chairman of ACOMORAN, Comrade Apelogun denied orchestrating attacks on ANACOWA members, saying:" One Rasheed Azees who has been parading himself as the state chairman of outlawed ANACOWA has never worked as Okada rider. He relocated from Lagos to Sagamu in 2011 and made moves to forcibly emerge as the leader of Okada riders in the community where I was born, live and worked as Okada rider for many years before God elevated me to the apex leadership position of ACOMORAN as state chairman. "Instead of approaching the state government and House of Assembly for proper recognition, the leadership of ANACOWA launched a fruitless smear campaign against ACOMORAN and my humble self." He added:" I was in Lagos with my wife to submit her visa application at the collection centre of British High Commission on Billings Way, Oregun, Ikeja, on the day they maliciously claimed that I led my members to attack their members during which one Saheed Adebisi was killed. The matter was thoroughly investigated by the police and I was exonerated of any complicity. "When I was informed about the incident on the telephone, I drove straight from Lagos with my wife to Sagamu Police Station to explain to the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) that I was not at the scene of the incident. I was later summoned by the then Commissioner of Police, Ikemefuna Okoye, where Azees even confessed that it was one Oluaye that killed Adebisi. But Oluaye was not even at the scene of the incident where the said Adebisi was allegedly killed because he was on his sick bed. The police and State Security Service investigated the matter and found out that I was in Lagos at the time of the incident. "It may interest you to know that the boy(Adebisi) did not die of gunshot as was alleged but the boy's head was smashed against a stationary car when he rode on a motorcycle with a member of ANACOWA called Shuga. The result of an autopsy carried out on his body also confirmed that he did not die of gunshot but fatal injury. I am a respected title holder in Sagamu and Ogun State in particular, hence, I couldn't be involved in any act of violence or constitute nuisance to the society." In his reaction, the spokesman of Ogun Police Command, Mr. Muyiwa Adejobi, described the allegations as untrue. He said the police command was only carrying out its responsibilities in line with the directive of the state government which approved and recognised ACOMORAN and AMORAN as Okada operators. "ANACOWA is not a recognised body for Okada riders in Ogun State. The state government approved only ACOMORAN and AMORAN and duly notified security agencies, including the Department of State Security Service (DSS), state police command for effective monitoring to forestall lawlessness or breach of peace. We are therefore not bound by any court judgment to permit their operation in Ogun State. "Instead of coming up with unnecessary allegations, they should approach the state government and the state House of Assembly for recognition and stop causing trouble because we have more serious assignments to handle than chasing Okada riders who have no permission to operate in this state."

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