



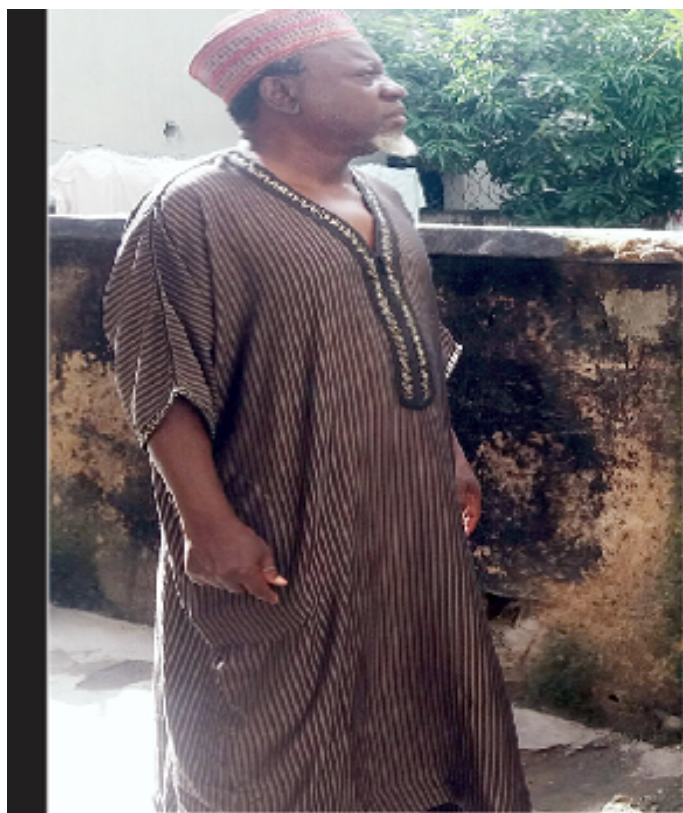
THE NATION



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[HOME](#) [NEWS](#) [POLITICS](#) [BUSINESS](#) [COLUMNISTS](#) [SPORTS](#) [ENTERTAINMENT](#) [MAGAZINE](#)[EDUCATION](#) [ONLINE SPECIAL](#) [EDITORIAL](#) [FORUM](#)

'Our ugly encounter with trigger-happy cops'

June 20, 2020 in [City Beats](#), [Featured](#), [News Update](#)[0](#)

•Sadiq's father looking at the fence that a gunman



•Sadiq

For some Nigerians the COVID-19 pandemic is not only about the virus that is killing people in thousands all over the world, it is also a season of brutality by the police and other security agents tasked with implementing the consequent lockdown, GRACE OBIKE reports.

- ***Family relives ordeal as plain-clothes policemen invade home, shoot teenage son***
- ***17-year-old survivor: I had to run for my life***

It was Ramadan fasting period and 17-year-old Sadiq Ibrahim was trying to ensure that his family members observed the usual prayers in his father's study since the lockdown occasioned by the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic prevented them from praying in the mosque.

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He had just finished his ablution, arranged the room and was reading as he waited for his parents and siblings to join him when he started hearing gunshots.

Unknown to him, some plain-clothes policemen were in their neighbourhood, searching for some criminals who were said to have kidnapped an army officer and a few other people in Kogi State.

At first, Sadiq tried to ignore the unfriendly sound of gunshots, believing that he had no business with the brains behind them. But when the shots became persistent and were getting nearer, he looked out of the window only to see a dreadlocks wearing man in jeans and T-shirt jumping into their compound in Gwarimpa part of Abuja, the federal capital.

Thinking that his family was being attacked by armed robbers, Sadiq sneaked out the back door and ran towards his neighbour's house. The neighbour's fence is low and has no barbed wire, so he planned to jump over the fence and take refuge.

Just then, he saw another gun trotting man who opened fire as soon as he sighted Sadiq. The hapless teenager turned round and ran back towards their second neighbour's house. Although the fence is higher and fortified with razor-sharp barbed wire, he damned the danger and jumped over it as the dreadlocks wearing gunman galloped after him, shooting sporadically.

In the process of scaling the fence, Sadiq's body was badly bruised by barbed wire. But he cared less because his life was more precious. Unfortunately, the neighbours he thought would give him refuge had shut their doors and did not respond to his cries.

Not feeling safe in the compound, Sadiq decided to jump out and seek refuge elsewhere, but in the process, he was shot in the arm. Driven by the fear of death, he felt no pains as he continued to

run until he hid himself in a bush. He was, however, forced to leave his hiding place as thorns tore into his skin, only to find that two of his assailants were still searching for him.

As soon as they sighted Sadiq, the dreadlocked man began to chase him again, running with the excitement of a hunter that had sighted an antelope.



"It was like he realised that he was never going to catch up with me," Sadiq said. "So, at a point, he started shouting thief, thief, as he ran after me. But the people on my street ignored him because they know that I'm not a thief.

"Unfortunately, a stray bullet hit a man that was passing by and he died. We later learnt that the man does not even live on our street."

Sadiq said the gun trotting cop chased him over another 200

metres as he ran towards the house of his friend whose father is a former senator. On getting to the house, he ran past his friend's elder brother who was shocked at the sight of the blood that dripped from the teenager's arm.

Sadiq ran upstairs where the family quickly wrapped his bleeding arm with a rag. He was weak and almost fainting when the man in dreadlocks arrived.

He asked after Sadiq from the young man at the door and the young man told him that Sadiq had left. But he sighted the trail of blood that had dropped from Sadiq's arm and in anger he handcuffed the young man, insisting that Sadiq must be brought out.

The gun trotting man eventually introduced himself to the ex-senator as a police officer and the ex-senator asked that Sadiq be brought out and handed over to the policeman, who also arrested Sadiq friend's elder brother for initially refusing to bring Sadiq out.

But Sadiq said he never knew that the dreadlocked man was a policeman, saying that he would have cooperated with him if he did.

He said: "I thought it was an armed robber. He did not identify himself to me as a police officer or ask me to stop. He just started shooting at me the moment he saw me.

"If he had identified himself, I would not have been scared. I would have gone with him. His intention was to kill me. He said so himself when I asked him why he shot at me. He said I was even lucky; that his intention was to kill me."

Tears on the home front

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The dreadlocks wearing policeman tried to force Sadiq to ride with him in a Corolla LE vehicle that already had four plain-clothes men in it, but the boy refused, saying that he was not sure that they were policemen and that he wanted to get home first to ensure that his family was safe.

The dreadlocked man stopped a tricycle which they boarded together with the senator's son to Saheed's family house only to find his father and brothers already packed into a police bus and were looking for him.

Sadiq's mother was making barbecue in the compound when she also heard gunshots, ran into the kitchen and shut the door. But a man came banging the door and asking her to open. She did and the strangers gathered everyone in the house and made the females to kneel down while the males were made to lie on the floor.

Sadiq's father, Engr. Abubakar Yaro, a former sole administrator for the National Iron Ore Mining Company (NIOMCO), said the uninvited guests looked every bit like armed robbers and he did not know who they were until he and his sons were marched outside and he saw one of their badges. That, he said, was when he realised that they were policemen from the Special Tactical Squad of the Inspector General of Police office.

He said the family was unaware of what had happened to Sadiq until they had been packed into a police bus after the men had beaten up his other sons who tried to ask who they were. He said that one of Sadiq's friends had seen the men in a bus and rushed to the house to inform them about their presence.

He added: "When they brought him into our bus and I saw him, I cried. We pleaded with them to allow us take him to the hospital but they refused.

"It was when we got to the office that we heard that an army major and some people had been kidnapped in Kogi State and the kidnappers were asking for a lot of money as ransom and they had been given the assignment to track them.

"They said they had traced them to the front of my house. They showed me the picture of a bushy abandoned space opposite my house, and there was no recorded voice of the kidnappers to indicate that they mentioned my house. "As far as I am concerned, they have no respect for human dignity. We pay the tax from which the guns they use are purchased, but they are using them to kill us."

Sadiq's cousin, Fatima Baba-Shehu who posted the incident on social media told our reporter that shortly after the police had driven off with the arrested members of the family, they returned to pick up the bullet shells.

She added: "When I arrived at my aunt's house, I was told that the men that came were drunk and reeking of alcohol. And when we went to see them at the SARS office in Guzape, I was told that each of the men who arrested them was given shots of alcohol as they arrived the station with their captives."



Fatima, who gave the name of the man who allegedly shot Sadiq as Sgt Yohanna Ebilong, said that when she went in to see Sadiq and realised that his condition was getting critical, she begged them to allow the family take him to the hospital, but they said they wanted to take him to the Gwagwalada Specialist Hospita.

She, however, said the family was eventually able to convince the officers to allow the family to take him to the National Hospital where it was realised that the bullet had damaged his radius, ulna bones and the tendons on his wrist. He had to undergo a plastic and orthopaedic surgery for about eight hours and the family paid almost N500,000.

Efforts made by our reporters to get the reaction of the Nigeria Police Force to the incident yielded no results as repeated phone calls made to the Police Public Relations Officer, Mr Frank Mba, a

Deputy Commissioner of Police, went unanswered.

A catalogue of human rights abuses in lock down period

The experience of Sadiq and his parents about police brutality has been retold by many families across the country.

Speaking during a programme on Channels TV on January 23, 2019, police spokesperson Mr. Frank Mba, who was a guest on the show, had assured Nigerians that the reforms on SARS would not be cosmetic. He said the squad would be decentralised in a bid to correct its abnormalities, restore order and bring the police closer to the people.

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Mba said the police would work with other security and safety agencies to ensure a safe and secure environment. But since then and during the lockdown, security agents have continued with the use of excessive force in their bid to implement the lockdown orders in different parts of the country.

On April 1, officials of the Delta State Taskforce on Environment attacked two journalists, Michael Ikeogwu and Matthew Omonigho, who were monitoring the compliance with the stay-at-home order over the Covid-19 pandemic for asking questions as to why they were ordering people to come out for environmental sanitation when they were supposed to be on lockdown as directed by the federal government.

In the process, the taskforce destroyed a Nikon D3100 camera belonging to one of the journalists. Omonigho, who confirmed the incident in a telephone interview, however, said the chairman of the taskforce eventually fixed the damaged camera.

On April 2, a 28 years old man, Joseph Kpesu, was killed by suspected soldiers who were out to enforce the sit-at-home order in Asaba, Delta State for refusing to stop at a checkpoint. Omonigho, who reported the incident, explained that the soldier in question was arrested, taken to the Area Command and a petition was been filed for his prosecution.

On April 3, a surgeon with the University of Uyo Teaching Hospital, Daniel Edet, was taking his sick wife to the hospital when he was stopped by a police sergeant who was trying to enforce the stay-at-home order and was assaulted. The Nation correspondent in Uyo, Bassey Anthony, who confirmed the incident, said that the police had been very uncooperative with essential duty workers, particularly medical doctors who felt like they were not being carried along.

The development prompted the Nigerian Medical Association of the state to call for the sack of the Commissioner for Health while the threats by doctors in the state to embark on a strike led to the demotion of the officer.

On April 5, a diabetic 26-year-old petrol attendant, Chibuisi Okameme, was shot dead by some policemen attached to the Ohuru Isimiri Police Division in Aba Abia State on his way to the hospital.

On April 7, six young people were killed in the Sabon Gari Trikania Market after a clash between the police and traders who had defied the stay at home order in search of their daily bread and the police shot into the crowd to disperse them. On the same day, a popular television station reported that its reporter was taking videos of policemen checking motorists at a checkpoint in Delta State when he was attacked and dragged to the police station after his equipment had been confiscated.

On April 14, protesters in Uratta, Abia State went on the rampage, demanding the release of an Uratta driver that was eventually discovered to have been killed. On the same day in Anambra State, two men were killed by the police for drinking beer in front of their compound. Policemen drove in and ordered them to go inside but they refused.

On April 15, a middle-aged commercial driver, Amobi Igwe, was killed by a Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) officer in Isialangwa, Abia State for refusing to pay bribe. In Osun State on April 17, the Nigeria Police announced that it had dismissed two officers for assaulting a woman in Iwo; an incident that was videotaped.

On April 18, a drunken police officer in Ohafia, Abia State killed 20-year-old Friday Arunsi after his colleague had injured the victim with a machete. According to an eyewitness who spoke with The Nation reporter on the telephone on condition of anonymity because according to him the case was under investigation and only the community council had the permission to speak on it, described the victim as very strong.

In a report by the Agence France-Presse (AFP), on the same day in Borno State, five women and children met their demise in a stampede, although a witness was reported as claiming that 12 people died as N5000 and cloths were being handed to thousands of people in Gamboru.

On April 20, ten-year-old Usman Abdulkadir was shot in the head by the police while trying to disperse people who were buying and selling at a market in Ringim, Jigawa State while enforcing the lockdown, leading to a violent protest.

On April 21, the police in Ogun State opened fire in a market on the Lagos-Abeokuta Expressway, leading to the death of a 25-year-old motorcycle repairer, Akeem Akinsanya, while many others were injured.

On May 3, the COVID-19 taskforce in Abia State severely flogged a young woman for not wearing a facemask. The video trended on Facebook. On May 13, officers of the Nigerian police were accused of killing a 20-year-old 300-level student of the University of Jos, Rinji Bala, during the lockdown.

On May 19, 62-year-old Mrs. Florence Onuobodo was killed in a stampede while four others including a 91-year-old woman were injured in Ikwerre, Rivers State during the sharing of state government's Covid-19 palliative in the area. [close](#)

On May 20 in Lagos, an Inspector of Police attached to Ikotun Division killed a 28-year-old Islamic cleric Fatai Oladipupo. On May 21, hundreds of Youths in Njikoka, Anambra State went on the rampage, following the death of Anthony Okafor, an apprentice barber in the area said to be an only son of his parents, when members of the police force who were trying to enforce the curfew in the state were pursuing him for being outside after 8pm but he was knocked down by a vehicle.

In Waterside LGA on May 22, another protest erupted after a pregnant woman, Waidat Adedeji, reportedly died after she was unduly delayed for hours by policemen enforcing the lockdown order and she bled to death.

On May 26, social media user @OworoTv tweeted about an incident in Iyana Oworo Berger bus Stop in Lagos State where 16-year-old Tina Ezekwe was shot by a drunken #SARS Officer while in a public vehicle. An Assistant Superintendent of Police and a Police Inspector attached to Bariga Police Station in Lagos have since been arrested and paraded over the alleged killing of Ezekwe and the shooting of 35-year old Musa Yakubu on May 26 at the Berger area of Lagos State."

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