

# Motor dealers protest colleague's death allegedly aided by Customs officials

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MOTOR dealers, in Ibadan, on Saturday, locked down parts of Ibadan metropolis in protest over the death of one of their colleagues, late Tunde Abdul (29), whose death they alleged was aided by officers of the Nigerian Customs Service at Alapako axis of the Lagos-Ibadan expressway, in the early hours of Saturday.

The deceased, who was reportedly in a **Toyota Camry** salon car he had gone to pick at Tin Can Port, Apapa, Lagos State, was on his way to Ibadan in company with two of his colleagues who were also driving two other vehicles, before he was crushed to death by a **DAF truck with Osun State registration number PRN 123 XA**.

According to one of his colleagues who was with him when the incident occurred, and who spoke with **Sunday Tribune** on the condition of anonymity, "we were coming from Lagos with three vehicles. I drove one of them while Abdul and our colleague, S.K, drove the two others.

"When we got to Alapako axis of the Lagos-Ibadan expressway, we were stopped by some Customs officials who demanded to check the particulars of the

vehicles. We gave to these to them without hesitation since they were genuine.

"After giving the papers to the head of the patrol team, he told us he needed to verify the authenticity of the papers, so he asked us to wait till daybreak. That was around 2.30a.m. We pleaded with him to allow us to go but he turned deaf ears to our pleas, insisting we had to wait till daybreak.

"It was at this point that Abdul and S.K. decided to go and stay in the car, as it was raining at that moment, coupled with the fact that the Customs officer was not ready to listen to our pleas.

"In a twinkling of an eye, while Abdul and S.K. were in the vehicle, a truck loaded with carbonated drinks lost control and ran into the vehicles parked by the road side".

The eyewitness further informed **Sunday Tribune** that the Customs officers refused to take Abdul, who was seriously injured, and S.K, who sustained minor injuries, to a nearby hospital in their vehicle.

"I had to carry the two of them inside the third vehicle and headed towards Ibadan as the officers left the scene almost immediately after the incident," he added.

The late Abdul was, how-



The remains of the late Tunde Abdul after the accident, on Saturday. PHOTO: NURUDEEN ALIMI

ever, confirmed dead at a private hospital in Ibadan, while S.K., who sustained minor injuries, was admitted at the same hospital for medical treatment.

The deceased, who is survived by a pregnant wife and a child, has since been buried according to Islamic rites at his hometown, Ijebu-Ode.

But before he was buried, in protest of their colleague's death, motor dealers, in their hundreds, stormed the Customs area office in Ibadan, dumping the corpse of the deceased at its gate.

They also blocked the roads around the Customs office, making them impassable for motorists ply-

ing the axis.

As a result of this, security was beefed up at the Customs' office by the Customs officials and policemen, while the gridlock was eventually cleared by the police to ensure free flow of traffic.

Addressing journalists at the Customs office, the Public Relations Officer of the Motor Dealers Association, Ibadan Chapter, Mr Vincent Ayodeji, who corroborated the narration of the eyewitness, said "the people are protesting because such an accident would not have occurred if not for the high-handedness of the officers," he said.

He, however, stated that they met with some Cus-

toms officials who said that the Area Controller of Customs was not on seat, adding that they had been asked to come back for further discussion on Monday.

He urged the government to investigate the matter thoroughly.

When contacted, the Assistant Public Relations Officer at Oyo/Osun Area Command of the Nigerian Customs Services, Lt Col Benjamin, an Assistant Superintendent of Customs II, said that the area command was still conducting investigations into the occurrence, adding that it would make its findings known to the public at the conclusion of investigations.