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Customs' thug causes accident, death of trader

JULY 17, 2015 : OLALEYE ALUKO 8 COMMENTS

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Ijanikin area, Lagos-Badary Expressway

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A trader, Kabiru Mohammed, has been killed at a checkpoint of the Nigerian Customs Service in the Ijanikin area of Lagos after a hoodlum threw an object at the tyre of his moving vehicle.

PUNCH Metro learnt that Mohammed's vehicle thereafter somersaulted, and swerved off the road, leading to a lone accident.

It was gathered that the victim reportedly died on the spot.

Our correspondent learnt that on Friday, July 10, 28-year-old Mohammed, who was

said to be dealing in second-hand shoes, was returning from the Seme area in his car at about 5am.

It was learnt that the trader was stopped at a checkpoint manned by customs officials around the Federal Government College area in Ijanikin.

PUNCH Metro gathered that after the inspection by the NCS officials, Mohammed was asked to go.

However, one of the thugs, reportedly working with the NCS officials, was said to have given Mohammed's vehicle a chase and thrown an object at the car tyres, which made the vehicle to swerve and somersault.

It was gathered that before Mohammed could be rescued, he had died.

Policemen from the Ijanikin division and soldiers at another checkpoint in the area took Mohammed's corpse away.

A commercial driver, identified only as Suleiman, said when the officers and the thugs realised that Mohammed was dead, they fled the checkpoint.

He added that the thug hurled the object in error, thinking that Mohammed did not "settle" the customs officials.

He said, "It was about 5.30am. The man was coming from the Seme area and packed second-hand shoes in his vehicle. He was stopped by the customs officers, and he settled them.

"They asked him to go, but one of the *Kelebes* (thugs) lurking around the checkpoint did not know the man had

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been cleared. He ran after him and threw the metal object under his tyre. The car climbed the object and the driver lost control of the vehicle.

"The car somersaulted, and went off the road. The officers and the thug took to his heels immediately. I later heard it was the police and some soldiers who came to remove the corpse."

A source in the area alleged that the thugs, who were commonly called *Aja* or *Kelebe*, usually worked with customs officers at the checkpoint to arrest traders carrying contrabands or those who refused to bribe them.

"The *Kelebes* do not wear uniforms, but you will see them lurking around the checkpoints. They collect money from the drivers, and harass people as if they were the customs officers. They always share the money collected," he added.

The Lagos State Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Kenneth Nwosu, confirmed Mohammed's death. He added that the family had, however, requested the corpse from the Ijanikin division for burial.

He said, "The police at Ijanikin recovered the corpse. What we have is a case of a fatal accident. Meanwhile, the family members have shown up at the division to request the body of their relative. It has been released to them."

The Public Relations Officer, NCS, Federal Operations Unit, Ikeja, Lagos, Uche Ejiesieme, said the comptroller had ordered a detailed investigation into the incident. He added that the findings would soon be made public.

He said, "We are investigating the cause of the incident. It is pertinent to note that it is not in our character to exhibit conducts capable of putting people's lives at risks.

"The comptroller has ordered an investigation into the matter.

"Meanwhile, our hearts and condolences go to the family and dependents of the deceased."

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