

Police battle NSCDC for shielding killer officials

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Okoye

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The Lagos State Police Command and the state command of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps are at daggers drawn over the refusal of the NSCDC to release its officials accused of killing a motorcyclist, Osita Okoye.

Findings by our correspondent showed that detectives at the State Department of Criminal Investigations, Yaba, have established that Osita was killed by bullets from the gun of a female officer of the corps.

The officer was said to be among an eight-man team that stormed the Forte Oil Petrol Station on 21 Road, FESTAC Town, on April 6 during the fuel scarcity period.

PUNCH Metro reported that the officers, who were asked to protect the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation pipelines in the area, left their duty post for the filling station where there was a long queue of motorists.

There was, however, an altercation between the officials and some fuel hawkers by the roadside.

In the ensuing confusion, the 27-year-old victim was shot dead.

Our correspondent gathered from police sources that some top shots of the NSCDC had refused to allow a parade of the corps' officers for identification, interrogation and prosecution.

The manager of the filling station where the incident occurred, Adeshina Olugbenga, had told the police that he could recognise the officials that carried out the operation.

He said, "On that day, the operatives of the NSCDC arrived at about 12.15pm. They were led by an Igala man, who bore tribal marks.

"He was discussing with me when I heard sporadic gunshots. The leader of the operatives raised his hand, and all the NSCDC operatives jumped into their vehicle and fled the scene. It was later that I learnt somebody was shot dead."

The bus driver, who was also shot in the lap, Oladiran Atolagbe, said he had parked his vehicle to queue for fuel when he heard gunshots, adding that it was while running for cover that he was hit.

It was gathered that the riot that trailed the killing would have consumed the NSCDC office in FESTAC Town, but for the intervention of military officers from the Ojo Cantonment and policemen from the FESTAC division.

The Head of the Department of Intelligence, NSCDC, Rabiul Solomon, and the Assistant Commandant of the corps, Adeyinka Adeboye, reportedly visited the FESTAC Police Division, promising to assist with investigations.

However, a police source said the corps had frustrated investigations.

He said, "The NSCDC has been shielding the culprits. On April 19, 2016, a letter was written to

their commandant on the matter, asking for a meeting, but he didn't honour the invitation.

"On April 25, a reminder was sent that the suspects be handed over to the homicide section of the SDCI, but they were not.

"A few days after the incident, independent witnesses told detectives that the NSCDC officers killed and injured the victims.

"Also, 15 expended shells of 7.62mm ammunition fired by the NSCDC officials were recovered. And one of those who sustained injuries has provided medical reports which implicated the officers."

Another source said a case of conspiracy and murder had been established against the NSCDC officials, while conspiracy and accessory after the facts, was being established against the top officers.

The elder brother of the victim, Chukwudi, said he was buried last Thursday in their hometown in Ukwulu, in the Dumukofia Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Chukwudi appealed to the Inspector-General of Police, Solomon Arase, the Lagos State Governor, Akinwunmi Ambode, and non-governmental organisations to give the victim justice.

The spokesperson for the NSCDC, Lagos Command, Mefor Chibuzor, said he could not hear our correspondent well on the telephone.

Subsequent calls placed to his phone were diverted.

He had yet to respond to a text message sent to him on the matter as of the time of filing this report.

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