

# Four killed as customs chase suspected smugglers in Ogun

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No fewer than four persons have been killed after men of the Nigeria Customs Service, Ogun State Command, chased a man suspected to be a smuggler on the Sagamu-Abeokuta Road.

It was learnt that the man, Saubana Onila, was in a convoy conveying some bags of rice suspected to have been smuggled.

Onila was said to be a former unit chairman of the National Union of Road Transport Workers, Grammar School unit, at the Sapon area of Abeokuta, Ogun State.

He was said to be driving a Mazda 626 loaded with 25 bags of rice, when the incident occurred.

The customs men were said to have flagged down the cars, but the drivers, including Onila allegedly refused to stop, forcing the operatives to go after them.

*PUNCH Metro* gathered that the officers opened fire on Onila's car. He subsequently lost control of the vehicle and hit a Toyota Camry, conveying three occupants.

In a chat with one of our correspondents, one Dimeji Balogun, who posted the incident on *Facebook*, said, "Onila lost control and hit a Toyota Camry, and the three occupants died instantly.

"Sympathisers took over the streets of Abeokuta and took the remains of Onila to the customs' office on Quarry Road, Abeokuta, to show their displeasure, while the corpses of the three others had been deposited in a mortuary."

The protesters, who had put the corpse of the deceased in a taxi and headed for the command's headquarters, but were prevented from reaching the customs' office by the combined teams of the Nigeria Police Force, the Nigerian Army, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps and men of the Ogun State Vigilance Group.

A protester, who claimed to be an eyewitness, Sola Josiah, said Onila and four other drivers had loaded 25 bags of rice each in five cars at the Kuto Motor Park, Abeokuta.

"The customs patrol team on sighting the convoy, shot at one of the vehicles driven by Onila, which made him to lose control, forcing the vehicle to somersault and finally landed in a ditch.

“We had left Kuto Market in Abeokuta with our vehicles loaded with 25 bags of rice each. When we got to Sowo Village we saw customs’ vehicle with men inside it.

“I thought there won’t be any issue because we normally pay them N5,000 on each trip. But they gave us a hot chase. They caught up with me, while Onila’s car tyres were blown out with gunshot and his Mazda 626 car somersaulted,” Josiah said.

Josiah, who said his vehicle was seized and driven to the state command of the customs, stated that two other drivers escaped.

However, the Public Relations Officer, NCS, Ogun Area Command, Usman Abubakar, denied the claim that one of the NCS operatives shot at any vehicle.

He said, “The information at my disposal is that one of our patrol teams went on routine patrol this morning (Wednesday) along Kobape-Sagamu Interchange.

“On sighting a customs’ vehicle, the occupants of those vehicles drove on top speed. One of the vehicles fell into a ditch. The occupants of that vehicle ran away.

“Our men now brought the vehicle down to Abeokuta. There was no shootout with anybody. Our men have no cause to shoot at anybody.

“The police have been invited; we are on top of the situation. The matter is under investigation by the customs and the police.”

The Ogun State Police Public Relations Officer, ASP Abimbola Oyeyemi, said the report at his disposal on the incident was still sketchy and promised to get back with details.

He said, “We heard about the incident, but the information is still sketchy. We are trying to get the true picture of the story.

“But some people went on the rampage protesting. In order not to let the situation degenerate into bloodshed, the Commissioner of Police, Ahmed Iliyasu, directed the Area Commanders, Sagamu and Abeokuta and other senior police officers to go there. The whole thing will be resolved.”

The Sector Commander, Federal Road Safety Corps, Ogun State, Clement Oladele, said the number of victims killed in the crash could not be ascertained because of the riot that followed.

“We don’t have the identities of the victims. It became riotous and we had to call the police,” he added.