

SPECIAL FEATURES

#EndSARS: Nigerians reveal horrific encounters with SARS policemen

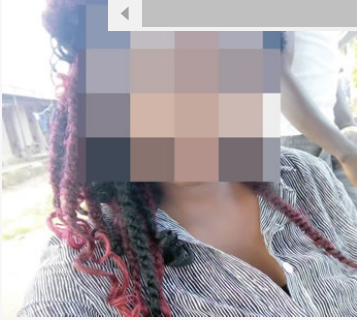
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Nigerians assaulted by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad officers share their stories with SUNDAY PUNCH

‘SARS men hit me with a gun, passed my pants around’



It was July 15 last year and I was a student at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State at the time. I was attending a friend's elder brother's wedding. We had booked an OAU staff bus from Ile-Ife to the wedding venue in Ilorin, Kwara State.

On the way, we were stopped by four SARS officials on black T-shirts and jeans. Their Hilux van was parked on the other side of the road. Two of them crossed to the side of the road where our driver parked the vehicle. They pointed to the four of us to come down with our bags. We thought it would be the normal 'stop-and-extort' but it was beyond that. One of us, Aduke, was very sick. So, she sat beside a gutter by the roadside.

One of the officers threatened to slap her for sitting down. Meanwhile, they were already checking the bags of the guys. They asked for our identity cards and we showed them our OAU ID cards. They collected them and threw them into the back of their vehicle without checking.

They checked my bag and brought out my pants. One of them, a fair-complexioned guy, hooked his index finger into the strap of one of my bras and passed it to his colleagues and jokingly asked about the size I wear.

He also raised the pants and asked why I had G-strings if I wasn't a prostitute. An officer checked a bag of one of us called Dare and picked his phone. He claimed that some pictures in the phone were incriminating. They didn't even allow Dare to explain anything to the officer, who was still holding my pants, before they hit him with gun butt. They told our other friends, Aduke and Akin, to leave immediately or they would shoot them as they threw their clothes and bags at them.

About 7pm, they told us to get into the back of the vehicle. Dare refused, saying he didn't commit any offence. I was scared. They hit us with the butt of their guns and handcuffed Dare's hand to mine. My offence was that I complained about the way they were passing

My friend's head bled profusely and he looked tired. One of the officers asked me to help him. He removed the cuffs from my hand. I took the gown I intended to wear at the wedding and wrapped it round his head. He cuffed my hand back to Dare's after I had finished helping him (Dare). They kept driving and it was getting dark. We couldn't use our phones as they had collected them.

After they drove for some time, Dare slumped against the body of the vehicle. They eventually stopped in front of a deserted First Bank in a small town. They told us to come down. The officer driving stopped and they pulled Dare and me down from the back. I stumbled and fell on Dare. In the process, one of them kicked me with his boot. They asked us to give them money. We couldn't object because they threatened to kill us. I made a withdrawal of N10,000 from my account and I requested for Dare's PIN. I withdrew N30,000 from his account and we gave all to them.

They hit Dare as they collected the money from me. Blood flowed from his forehead and back of his head. I cried as he was losing consciousness. We were there for about 20 minutes before a vigilante came to help us. He took us to a native hospital

— Ola Eloquence

'SARS officer tortured me for allegedly sleeping with his wife'



by a girl
operative, Nagbama Egboigbe, aka Smally, went viral.

I was humiliated by the SARS operative. I was not having an affair with his wife as he alleged. The lady in question, Sarah, is just a friend. I met her at Randeki Gold Hotel, Benin City, Edo State, two months ago and that was where we became friends. It was a platonic affair.

The day Smally met me in her house, she called me to come take her in my car to her mother's house. I was in her sitting room with her younger brother when Smally barged in. She was in her room and he went straight to her bedroom. Since I didn't know him before, I approached him to know what happened.

The next thing I saw was that he brought out a gun. When I saw the gun, I was scared and could not talk to him. He left with one of my phones, so I called the line and asked him to return my phone. He told me to come so that he could confirm something from the phone. He told me to meet him at a car wash.

When I got there, I asked him why he left with my phone and he told me that he was married to the lady. I explained to him that I had nothing to do with the woman and demanded the release of the phone. The next thing I saw was a group of boys, who came out of his car and started beating me up. I manage to lure them from an enclosed place where they were beating me to an open area, so that if they wanted to kill me, they would do so in public.

He later took me to Ugbor Police Station where he detained me overnight and handcuffed me. The investigating police officer did not take my statement. He said that Smally was his friend. He refused to let my wife take my car home but impounded it at the station.

When the divisional police officer came the next morning and saw my vehicle, he asked for the owner and they (policemen) told him that I was the one but that I was detained for sleeping with a policeman's wife. The DPO rebuked them and ordered them to remove me from the cell and bring me to his office to settle the matter. Sarah came and explained everything to the DPO. When Smally came, the DPO warned him never to go near me again because I did not have an issue with him. He later told me to go home — **Ese Idehen, Businessman**

I've not seen my brother since he was arrested three years ago -Oladeni



I am a footballer and businessman. I make shoes. I am a brother to Aliu Oladeni who got missing at age 17. We saw him last three years ago.

Some people came to our house on June 22, 2014 with sticks and cutlasses. I was not around. They broke the door and damaged the ceilings. They said they were looking for Aliu. They said they caught one of his friends, Sodiq, who robbed the previous night and he named Aliu as his partner.

My brother had gone to a viewing centre to see a football match the previous night and slept in the place.

Later that day, some family members, Aliu and me decided to go to Igando Police Division. When we got there, we saw a crowd gathered and Sodiq was there. A woman reported the robbery to the police. We asked the woman if she saw Aliu when she was being robbed and she said no.

She said three robbers came to her house and she saw them because they weren't masked. The woman said it was while they were attempting to escape that Sodiq was caught. It was after the mob tortured him that he lied that my brother was one of his accomplices.

I told the police officers that I used to know Sodiq as Aliu's friend, until he left our area about a year ago. The police asked Sodiq if Aliu was among his group but he didn't say anything.

case would be transferred to Federal SARS.

We hired a lawyer to help secure Aliu's release because we were sure of his innocence. The lawyer later asked us to forget about the case. A police inspector told my father that Aliu might not be seen again. Till today, we are yet to see him.

It has been hard for my father to cope. We sold our family land to pay for Aliu's release. My mother passed on some months ago because the situation was too much for her to bear — **Muritala Oladeni, Footballer**

'A fellow SARS official killed my police brother'



My elder brother, Felix Yohanna, served with the Nigeria Police Force for 15 years in Lagos before his transfer to Kaduna last year. He was killed by his fellow SARS officers.

He joined Kaduna SARS and he was promoted to the rank of inspector this year. We received a call that my brother went on an operation with his team and the O/C of SARS. We heard that they were attacked by Fulani herdsmen at a village in Birnin Gwari, Kaduna State. The claim was that my brother was shot by Fulani herdsmen.

We later received a call from Kaduna SARS office that my brother went on an operation with his team to recover illegal arms acquired by the herdsmen. A Fulani terrorist was arrested in connection with the attack.

it was the police that sold the gun to him. He confessed that the police killed my brother. My brother was killed by his fellow SARS officer because he was against taking a bribe to free the Fulani terrorist. They knew he might expose them. Another thing that proved to me that they killed my brother was that after they reported that he was killed by a herdsman, they brought his mobile smeared with blood.

Angrily, I asked a deputy commissioner of police in the state how they were able to recover his phone yet couldn't recover his body. It is four months and three weeks after his death but we are yet to see his corpse.

I know the Lord will fight for us. My brother was sincere as a police officer — **Ayuk Yohanna**

SARS officers beat me mercilessly in my kids' presence — Oparaekocha



They came to my house in the morning, looking for me and I introduced myself. I demanded who they were. One of them just flashed his identity card and informed me he was from SARS. After that, he called two of his colleagues who were apparently waiting outside. Those inside the room had AK47 rifles. My children were all in the house at the time. I did not want them to see people with guns inside the house, so I told the SARS men to move out.

But the SARS operatives refused to move out, instead, they started beating me. They were hitting me with their guns, I was brutalised and they even tore my clothes.

At that point, I started shouting to draw the attention of my neighbours. As this went on, I got in touch with the Chairman, Enugu State chapter of the Nigerian Union of Journalists, Mr. Rex Arum.

The officers also manhandled Arum when he got to my house. Afterwards, they handcuffed me and took me to their office.

Luckily for me, on getting to their office, the person in charge knew me and he was aware of my innocence in the matter the officers came to arrest me for.

He (their boss) told them to release me, adding that he knew I was innocent because he had investigated the case. I was beaten up and wounded for doing nothing.

They don't do any investigation. In fact, the case that they got involved in was already in court.

People use SARS to settle scores — in most instances, where there is a misunderstanding between two people, all it takes is for one of the parties to know somebody in SARS. They will take sides against the other person — **James Oparaekocha, Journalist**

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Contact: theeditor@punchng.com

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