

## Baby dies as Lagos bus driver crushes mother

Published [July 31, 2019](#)



• She was buried in her birthday dress – Father

Deji Lambo

A baby, Chimbusomma Uligwe, has died after a yet-to-be identified commercial bus driver knocked down her mother.

The driver, who was allegedly being chased by officials of the Lekki Concension Company Limited, in company with a mobile police inspector, Jonah Jatau, in the Eti-Osa Local Government Area of Lagos State, knocked down the Chimbusomma's mother, Tochukwu, around the Elf bus stop.

The impact of the accident on Tochukwu, who was at the bus stop waiting to board a vehicle home, was said to have made Chimbusomma to fall off her back. She reportedly hit her head on the pavement as a result.

While Tochukwu sustained injuries from the accident, *PUNCH Metro* learnt that her daughter's skull broke and she died on the spot on Wednesday, June 9, 2019, a day to her first birthday.

Chimbusomma's remains were buried at the Ikoyi Cemetery on her birthday.

An eyewitness, who identified herself simply as Ukamaka, said the tragedy would have been averted if other means were explored to apprehend the driver of the bus, with number plate APP 584 XX, adding that the driver and conductor ran away immediately the accident occurred to avoid being apprehended.

She said, "We were standing by the road when the bus approached our direction on top speed; it was being chased by a white Hilux van belonging to the LCC. Everyone at the bus stop attempted to jump out of its way, but it was too late for Tochukwu as the vehicle ran over her and her baby fell down and died in the process.

"Both the driver and the conductor abandoned the bus and escaped before a mobile police officer (Jatau) and one other person could step out of the patrol vehicle to arrest them.

"Those in the LCC vehicle should be blamed for the accident. We don't know why the driver was being chased, but the LCC officials should have taken the number plate of the bus to apprehend the driver whenever the bus passes through the toll gate again."

Tochukwu told *PUNCH Metro* that eyewitnesses apprehended Jatau as the LCC officials fled the scene.

The 34-year-old said, "I just found myself underneath the vehicle and when I came out, I started looking for my daughter, only for me to see that her skull had cracked open. The bus driver and conductor ran away; the officials of the LCC were nowhere to be found except Jatau, who was pinned down by people who witnessed the accident.

"Jatau managed to break loose and ran into the premises of a nearby firm, but one Oluwafemi Ogidan, who assisted in apprehending him initially, entered the premises so as not to allow him escape. But the mobile policemen of the company prevented other people from entering by closing

the gate, and instead arrested Ogidan, saying he was a witness to what happened and needed to make a statement.

“Ogidan was taken to the Maroko Police Station, where he was detained and charged. He was assisting me and I see no reason why he should be arrested. I am blaming the commercial bus driver and the people in the LCC vehicle, because my daughter’s death was due to their negligence.

“She would have celebrated her first birthday the day after. I was returning from where I had gone to pay for her cake when the tragedy struck.”

Chimbusomma’s father, Ikedinachukwu, while condemning the Divisional Police Officer of the Maroko Police Station for releasing Jatau and charging Ogidan, said his family had not heard from the LCC since the incident happened.

“My daughter was buried on July 10, 2019, which was her birthday. In fact, she was buried at the Ikoyi Cemetery in the dress I had bought for her birthday,” Ikedinachukwu said.

The couple’s counsel, Adebawale Bayo-Philip, accused the DPO of handling the case in an unprofessional manner, adding that he had petitioned the Assistant Inspector-General of Police, Zone 2, Onikan, Lagos, in a bid to get justice for Chimbusomma.

Bayo-Philip said in the petition that Ogidan was charged for assault and stealing of a riot gun valued at N500,000.

When contacted, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Bala Elkana, said the commercial bus driver knocked down Chimbusomma’s mother because the vehicle experienced brake failure.

He stated that the driver had been arrested and charged, adding that Ogidan was also charged for assaulting Jatau.

Elkana said, “The LCC vehicle was not chasing after anybody; the driver of the commercial bus, in his statement, said the vehicle experienced brake failure and he lost control of the bus. He did not only knock down the woman, but also hit the LCC vehicle that was passing.

“The policeman (Jatau) stepped out of the LCC vehicle, because the commercial bus had hit the patrol vehicle and he discovered that the driver had knocked down a woman. He wanted to help the woman when the crowd started attacking him.

“He had to escape to a particular company nearby, where he was rescued. The driver of the bus has been arrested and charged and the bus has also been impounded for inspection. Ogidan was charged, because he was part of the mob that attacked the policeman.”

The Head, Commercial and Corporate Media, LCC, Veronica Jacob, while commiserating with the bereaved family, said its officials did not chase after any bus, adding that its security patrol team assisted in reporting the incident at the Maroko Police Station.

Jacob said, “While we deeply sympathise with the family of the late Chimbusomma Uligwe on the unfortunate incident, which led to her death, we ask God to give the family the fortitude to bear the sad loss. No family should have to go through such experience.

“Please be advised that officials of the LCC were not involved in the pursuit of the commercial bus driver as alleged by the family. A commercial bus driver, who suffered break failure, lost control of the vehicle and unfortunately rammed into the mother, who at the time, strapped the baby to her back. Unfortunately, the driver of the bus abandoned the vehicle and absconded after the accident.

“However, the LCC security patrol assisted the victims and the incident was promptly reported at the Maroko Police Station. The patrol team further ensured that the driver of the commercial bus, who absconded earlier, made a confessional statement and was arrested by men of the Maroko Police Division.”

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