

Two officials arrested as Bayelsa task force allegedly kills tricyclist

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File copy: Handcuffs

Daniels Igoni, Yenagoa

Angry commercial tricycle operators took to the streets of Yenagoa, the Bayelsa State capital, on Tuesday in protest against the death of their colleague, Isaac Kosudi, allegedly in the hands of men of the state Ministry of Transport's task force on tricycles on the Swali Road.

It was gathered that the incident that led to Kosudi's death happened on Monday when the task force members arrested him and impounded his tricycle for alleged failure to buy N100 ticket for the day's operations in the Tombia area.

According to an official of the Tricycle Operators Association of Nigeria in the state, the task force members took Kosudi and his tricycle to their office in Swali.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said when they got to the task force office, they asked Kosudi, an indigene of the Ogbia Local Government Area of the state, to go and buy the ticket and pay a certain fine to reclaim his tricycle.

He said Kosudi pleaded with the task force officials that he did not have the money they demanded, but they insisted he had to pay.

It was learnt that his inability to pay the fine and buy the ticket angered some members of the task force, who beat him to a pulp.

It was further gathered that when they discovered that he was throwing up, they brought a substance suspected to be an insecticide and placed it beside him to make it look as if the victim poisoned himself.

PUNCH Metro gathered that Kosudi was rushed to a hospital in Yenagoa, where he eventually died.

The angry protesters, who blocked the state Secretariat Road and the Safety Road section of the Mbiama-Yenagoa Road, near the Government House, demanded justice for their slain colleague.

One of the tricyclists, who gave his name as John, lamented the maltreatment and oppression they were being subjected to by the task force operatives and policemen.

He said, “We are protesting because the oppression is too much. The discrimination against keke riders is too much. We are angry because the task force killed our colleague.

“They killed him yesterday (Monday) at Swali. We want the government to look into it. The government should restrain the task force members and policemen.”

Some hoodlums, who joined the protest, were said to have capitalised on the demonstration to torch the office of the task force on Swali Road.

The Commissioner for Transport, Grace Ekiotenne, later had a meeting with the leaders of the TOAN and members of the body, and advised everybody to remain calm and promised that government would ensure that the incident was not swept under the carpet.

Meanwhile, the state police command said it had arrested two members of the task force, Emomotimi Ogbe and Israel Monday, over the death of the Keke operator, whose name it gave as Mike.

The spokesperson for the command, Mr Asinim Butswat, said in a statement, “Preliminary findings reveal that the suspects, while on official duty of revenue collection on Monday, September 14, 2020, contravened a tricycle with MOT number 0617 on Imiringi Road, Yenagoa, for failure to obtain a unified sticker.

“Consequently, the tricyclist went to the task force office at Swali, Yenagoa, and thereafter started spitting out some substances, slumped and became unconscious. The victim was rushed to hospital for treatment, where he eventually died.”

Butswat said the Commissioner of Police, Mike Okoli, addressed the protesters and assured them of “a thorough investigation into the circumstances that led to the death of their colleague.”

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