

Hypertensive man dies as bribe-chasing 'LASTMAmen' seize vehicle

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By Deji Lambo

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Modibo and LASTMA GM, Oreagba

The family of a Bureau De Change operator, Modibo Usman, has been thrown into mourning after he died from shock following an encounter with two officers of the Lagos State Traffic Management Authority in the Surulere area of Lagos State.

PUNCH Metro gathered that Modibo, who was hypertensive, was being conveyed by his son, Mustapha, to the Foremost Radiology Consultant Hospital on Ogunlana Drive, Surulere, to obtain a test result for his daughter, Ummu, when he had the encounter with the officers.

Mustapha, while speaking to our correspondent on Sunday, said his father also had an appointment with his doctor at the Living Heart Hospital in the Lekki area of the state on the same day.

He said when the two officers stopped him for allegedly disobeying traffic light, his father pleaded that he was on his way for a medical emergency but the officers ignored him.

He alleged that the officers demanded a N50,000 bribe to release the vehicle.

Mustapha said, "My father and I kept pleading with them but the officers refused. My father was even crying and telling them that he had a medical emergency but they said that is what people usually say.

"The two officers ordered us to go to the back seat and they sat at the front and started driving us to the Foremost Radiology Consultant Hospital. My father continued crying that he was in an emergency; they then demanded N50,000 to release us.

“But when we got to the hospital, we quickly rushed to get the test result to show them so we could continue our journey to see his doctor at Lekki but the officers and the vehicle were nowhere to be found when we returned.

“Instantly, my dad suffered a shock and collapsed. I quickly alerted the nurses where we picked my sister’s result and they rushed to attend to him and confirmed him dead.

“When I rushed to the LASTMA office to inform the officers that what they did had caused my father’s death, they started saying I could take the vehicle but I left it there and called our relative, Mrs Yosi Yaduma, to inform her about what happened.”

Yaduma said she reported the case at the Area C Command in Surulere, adding that the two officers were arrested and the case transferred to the State Criminal Investigation Department, Yaba.

Lamenting that the bereaved family had been clamouring for justice, Yaduma said Modibo, who was the breadwinner of his family, was survived by two wives and 11 children.

She said, “The incident happened on Friday. Alhaji Modibo was a Bureau De Change operator who was hypertensive. He told the officers that he was going to a hospital, even if he had broken the rule, in cases of emergency, rules can be broken.

“He even pleaded with them that he wanted to get the results of his daughter suffering from Down Syndrome, and from there, he would be going to the Living Heart Hospital in Lekki to see his doctor but the officers demanded a bribe of N50,000.

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“The shock of the whole incident made Alhaji Modibo suffer an attack that made him collapse at the front of the hospital. That was how he died.

“After Mustapha informed me, I told one of the nurses to assist us with an ambulance and they conveyed his corpse to the 68 Nigerian Army Reference Hospital, Yaba, where he was also confirmed dead and his body deposited in a mortuary.

“Yesterday, the police called to inform me that the two LASTMA officers had been apprehended. Alhaji Madibo has been buried in accordance with Islamic rites but we want justice.”

An official of the facility where Modibo collapsed and died, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said, “His death was as a result of cardiac arrest. He was vomiting and his condition changed. We called a consultant to resuscitate him but all was to no avail and the patient was pronounced dead. A lot of people witnessed the incident. They only came to pick up a result at our diagnostic centre.”

The state Police Public Relations Officer, SP Benjamin Hundeyin, confirmed the incident, adding that investigation was ongoing.

The spokesperson for LASTMA, Olumide Filade, said the victim was not in an emergency at the time of the traffic light violation.

He said, “We are not aware of any case of bribery; it was not an emergency. The driver of the vehicle who happened to be Baba’s (Madibo) son violated the traffic light and the vehicle was impounded.

“We are in possession of a video of the violation and where Baba agreed that the officers should drop them at the Foremost Diagnostics. After dropping Baba and his son, the officers told him to instruct his son to follow them so he could know where the vehicle was, but Baba said his son did not know anywhere in Lagos.

“He said they would come later. But while they were at the Foremost Diagnostics, maybe Baba had a crisis and he passed on. Thereafter, the case was reported at Area C, from where it was transferred to the SCID, Yaba.”

LASTMA has been in the eye of the storm over alleged extortion of motorists through traffic lights.

A recent investigation by *PUNCH Metro* showed some men of the agency worked in connivance with the police.

The agency had promised to probe officers deployed in the Berger-Isheri area, who were implicated in the investigation by our correspondent.

Three weeks after, the outcome of the probe had yet to be revealed.

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