

Activists fume as soldiers kill cop, brutalise four

Deji Lambo and Godfrey George

Some activists and social commentators have condemned the brutalisation and killing of a cop by soldiers in Lagos.

An inspector serving with the Lagos State Police Command, Orukpe Monday, died from the torture he allegedly received from soldiers who attacked him and his colleagues in the Trade Fair area of the state.

Another Inspector, Igbafe Ojo, who was reportedly tortured by the soldiers, is hospitalised at the military hospital in the Ojo Military Cantonment, where doctors were said to be battling to save his life.

City Round gathered that the soldiers were on their way to attend a training programme at the Ojo Military Cantonment on Wednesday when the bus conveying them to the destination encountered a mild traffic around the Trade Fair area of the Lagos Badagry Expressway.

Speaking with one of our correspondents, an eyewitness said some of the soldiers, upon realising that the traffic was caused by policemen trying to pave the way for a truck driver to link the expressway, alighted from the vehicle to challenge the policemen.

The eyewitness, however, said the situation led to an argument that degenerated into a fight when one of the soldiers allegedly slapped one of the policemen, adding that the soldiers arrested two policemen. The three other policemen were said to have fled the scene.

"The soldiers beat and took two of the policemen to their barracks. They wanted to take the third policeman away but he shot into the air and escaped. The other inspector was also able to escape but the senior policeman was beaten severely, and they took his gun," the source noted.

Contacted, the state police spokesperson, Benjamin Hundeyin, said, "There was an issue between soldiers and police on Wednesday, and the command is working closely with the army high command to resolve the

issues. But one of the policemen involved in the incident is dead."

In a statement on Friday, the spokesperson, 81 Division Nigeria Army, Major Olaniyi Osoba, said the army was already in touch with the state police command to resolve the matter.

Reacting to the development, a social commentator, Dr Ugwueze Ikechukwu, said the greatest problem which had been acknowledged across the board was the lack of inter-agency collaboration between security agencies.

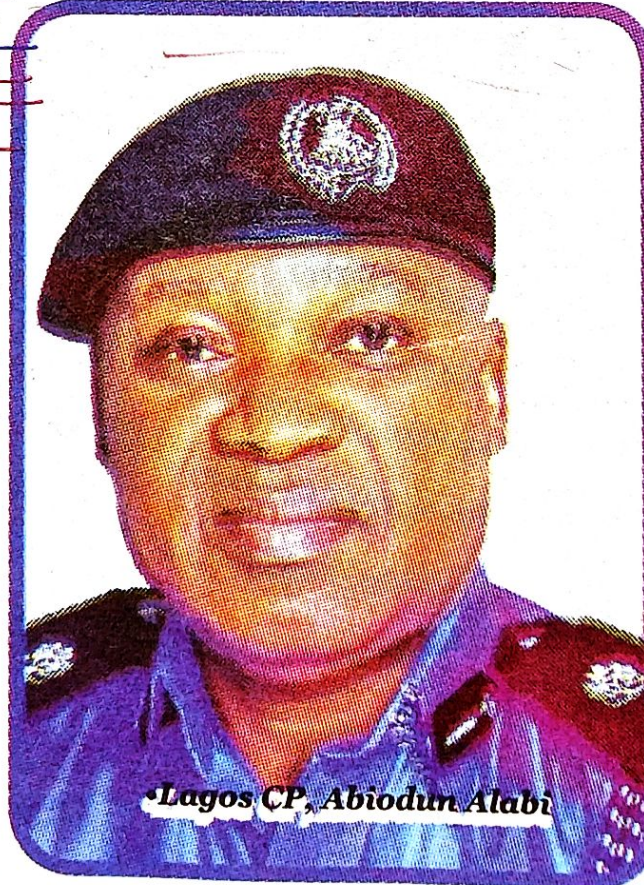
"There is suspicion and lack of trust even among security agencies. In any society where you have such issues, there is bound to be insecurity everywhere. Now, the police and army are always seen to be at loggerheads; this case of the killing of a policeman is not the first time.

"This thing, at a time, was a complete recurring decimal before Nigerians began to talk everywhere about it. The situation doesn't appear to have abated. It has to do with a lack of trust even among security operatives. In Nigeria, too much involvement of the military in internal security management will always lead to these kinds of infractions," he said.

He also noted that the military should be used sparingly for internal security issues to avoid such a situation.

In his comment, an activist and member of the Socialist Workers and Youth League, Juwon Sanyaolu condemned the action by the soldiers, noting that it was an act of impunity.

He added, "The problem with the Nigerian military is a culture of impunity, where people do things and do it with the background understanding that there can never be consequences for their actions. It is this culture of impunity that empowers the military with the effrontery to be brutal to citizens and other members of other armed forces, carry out shootings and other extra-judicial issues. When they are confronted, they will tell you, 'I will shoot you and nothing will happen.' It is insane for armed operatives to attack another officer from another force. This must not be allowed to continue."



Lagos CP, Abiodun Alabi