

Lagos Condemns Saula's Murder • Appeals For Calm

KAZEEMUGBODAGA

The Lagos State Government has condemned the gruesome murder of the state Chairman of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), Chief Saka Saula, and appealed for calm.

Commissioner for Transportation, Prof. Bamidele Badejo conveyed the sympathy of the state government to the family of the deceased, while describing the murder as a callous act.

He described Saula's murder as an ugly development, a colossal loss and an immeasurable setback for the NURTW which, he said, witnessed monumental growth under the leadership of Saula.

The commissioner appealed to the NURTW executive and members to maintain peace and shun violence.

He said the state government would liaise with the various security organisations to unravel the circumstances leading to the gruesome murder and unveil the perpetrators of the heinous act.

Badejo assured that justice would not only be done but that "it shall be seen to have been done."

Saka Saula, Transport Workers' Boss Assassinated

BY OUR REPORTERS

Popular transporter and chairman of the Caretaker Committee of the Lagos chapter of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), Alhaji Saka Saula, has been assassinated.

He was killed around 9.30 p.m. yesterday at his Adeboun Street, Iyana Ipaja residence, by four suspected assassins, who came in a Honda Accord car.

Alhaji Saka, 45, was reportedly attacked with guns by his killers who lured him out through three commercial motorcyclists.

The commercial motorcyclists, it was gathered, were discussing with him in front of the house, when the assassins struck.

He was shot several times by his attackers, who pursued him until he fell into a gutter.

His fall was allegedly aided by the *Jalamia* (kaftan) he was wearing.

But the general secretary of NURTW, Chief Stephen Falusi, denied this account, saying the assassins ambushed

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...Death Sparks Riots In Oshodi, Iyana Ipaja

Commuters along the Lagos-Abeokuta expressway, Iju, Ishaga had a hectic time getting to their destinations this morning as members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) prevented commuter buses from

plying the roads to protest the killing of their chairman, Alhaji Saula Saka.

Hell was let loose in Iyana Ipaja, base of the popular transporter, as his supporters took

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•The late Saka Saula. Photo (r) sympathisers at his house this morning. Above: The wife and children. Below: The bullet hole in his car. Bottom: The car that rushed him to hospital. Pix: P.M.News photographers.

The Man Saka Saula

The slain Chairman of the Lagos State branch of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), Alhaji Saka Saula, was born in Gbagura, Agboola Odofin compound in Abeokuta, Ogun State.

He started as a bus conductor in Lagos in 1976 and later became a driver.

According to Saula in an interview, "I learnt the rudiments of the trade from Thomas Ashodumeto, a man who is still a driver..."

He said they used to ply Palmgrove, Ladilak and Abule-Oja in Somolu and Bariga areas of Lagos. It was from here that he joined the NURTW and rose to become supervisor of motor parks, the union's branch PRO and later, the vice chairman of the union (Alimosho Branch 'A').

He rose to the position of chairman of the caretaker committee of the union and the substantive chairman in controversial circumstances that led to series of violence in some motor parks following bloody clashes between his supporters and thugs in the opposing camps.

He had four wives and several children, five of whom are said to be attending schools overseas.

He was in his late 40s when he was killed yesterday.

Saka Saula

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Alhaji Saka as he came out of his jeep after returning home.

Chief Falusi, who said the authentic account of how the NURTW boss met his death came from his wife, Alhaja Lateef Saula, disclosed that the assassins did not give the deceased any chance at all as they pumped hot lead into him.

Alhaja Lateefat and other members of the household were said to have rushed him to the Ikeja General Hospital in a Peugeot 206 car, where he was later confirmed dead.

Following the death of the transporter, *P.M. News* gathered that one of his aides has been arrested by the police to aid their investigation.

The residence of the deceased was a beehive of activities this morning as policemen commenced investigation into the killing.

The late Alhaji Saka Saula is survived by about four wives and many children, some of who are schooling abroad.

He was described as a generous man who tried to help anybody he came across.

The deceased had also often been linked to riots and civil disturbances in the state.

In April 2000, Saula and 19 others were arraigned before an Ikeja Magistrate's Court for causing a breach of peace within the court premises.

Violence erupted in January last year at Iyana Ipaja and spread to Dopemu, Pen Cinema in Agege



•Lagos State secretariat of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), locked this morning, with RRS team on guard.

Saka Saula To Be Buried Today

AYODELELAWAL

The remains of the slain chairman of National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), Alhaji Saka Saula will be buried today according to Muslim rites.

Steven Falusi, the state secretary of the NURTW told *P.M. News* this morning that the executive members of the union have discussed with the family and they have agreed to bury him today.

and Agbotikuyo. Investigations revealed that the crisis was rooted in a leadership tussle between Saula and an NURTW branch chairman, Alhaji Alamu Otegbeye.

Two persons were reportedly killed, while at least 10 others were injured in the mayhem.

P.M. News gathered that Saula, who, though had a slender frame, led his members with the fear of God.

Another respondent told *P.M. News* that Saula lived daily in suspicion and fear. "He would not go to night parties. He would not eat outside his home. You wouldn't even know that he was a rich man."

The late NURTW boss was detained by the police last year over the suspicion that he could disrupt the April general elections.

Self-Made

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ernment's knowledge and approval.

According to the Public Relations Officer, Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Mrs. Tejumade Olufemi, the state government had inquired about the installation from the commissioner of the ministry, Mr. Rotimi Agunsoye, after watching the event on television.

"When Agunsoye said he was not aware of the installation and never gave a staff of office to any traditional ruler, the governor

When *P.M. News* called at Saula's residence at Adeboun street, Iyana Ipaja, his final resting place in front of his three-storey building had already been dug.

Hordes of sympathisers have been trooping into his residence

...Death

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to the streets, turning back commuter buses and dislodging passengers from the buses.

Recalcitrant bus drivers were whipped and their vehicles damaged by the protesters who blamed the death of Alhaji Saka on the infighting within the Lagos chapter of NURTW.

Markets, shops and stalls were deserted as a result of the protest while area boys capitalised on the situation to rob stranded passengers.

One of the unlucky passengers, Mrs. Lola Aofolaju, who lost her valuables to some hoodlums in Alimosho recounts her ordeal: "I did not know of any crisis until I got to this bus stop around 6.15 a.m. The only thing I noticed was that people started running back from Iyana Ipaja and before I could escape, some boys swooped on me, beat me up and made away with my phone, wristwatch and bag."

Mrs. Aofolaju, who runs a boutique in Ojuelegba, claimed that her attackers made away

ordered the arrest of Sikiru," she said.

According to her, the self-acclaimed traditional ruler was arrested last Wednesday by men of the state environmental task force. He would be charged to court soon. Three of his thugs were also said to have been arrested.

Mrs. Juliet Njoku, counsel to the self-acclaimed ruler confirmed the arrest, saying that Kolawole did not impose himself as the traditional ruler of Igbo Elerin as claimed by those who arrested him.

Njoku stated that Kolawole

•Union leaders, Alhaji L.S. 1 morning.

to commiserate with the family.

At his residence, wailing rent the air as friends, relatives and sympathisers passed by the blood stained staircase leading to his personal residence where he was killed.

with N22,500 in her bag.

As at 9.45a.m. today, commuters were seen trekking from Iyana Ipaja suburbs to their various destinations.

Members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), operating at the Ikeja Main motor park, have taken the murder of Chief Saka Saula in good faith.

When *P.M. News* visited the usually busy motor park, members of the union were seen in mournful mood discussing the development while commercial activities were paralysed.

A leader of the group who spoke under condition of anonymity told *P.M. News* that the murder of their chairman was a big loss to the union.

"When you lose somebody of Governor (Saka)'s status, it is a big loss. It is sad. But we have taken it in good faith. We are a peace-loving set of people. We are serious-minded, and we have learned minds among us," he retorted.

Apart from the motor park, commercial transport activities were virtually paralysed in other parts of Ikeja.

and his relatives were participating in a carnival, adding that it was not an installation ceremony.

According to her, those arrested with Kolawole were his relatives and not thugs. She said efforts were being made to bail the detainees.

Njoku said the state's environmental law enforcement agents forced themselves into Kolawole's apartment and vandalised some of his property.

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs, Mr. Kunle Abass also confirmed the incident.