



## THE BARRICADE

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In the early hours of 25th February 2010, a 25 year old Nigerian left his home holding on to the only thing left for ordinary citizens of a country in a state of disorder and that is hope. It was another day to get to work and earn a living, he waved goodbye to close family friends and a neighbour he met around the corridor as he hurried to get out of the house and beat the early morning traffic rush. As he left, the young Nigerian waved and made what would be his last known words on earth "see you later". If only he had known he would not be seeing any of his family, friends or neighbours, he would have probably missed that day's work.

As it is with many unreported cases of armed robbery in Nigeria, the young Nigerian was accosted at the Idi Iroko bus stop whilst waiting for a bus. His assailants demanded he hand over his laptop and other belongings. Not done with taking his possession, they shot him at close range for a laptop that was worth less than two hundred British Pounds, approximately fifty thousand Nigerian naira.

This is the unfortunate story of Charles Umogo-Ogbolu. He is not a Nigerian politician or a known public figure, so the reader would be forgiven for wondering why his story and that of others like him do not make the front pages of the national media or that he did not get a mention in the

evening news. Horrific deaths of ordinary citizens happen so frequently that we have come to accept them as part of the sacrifice that comes with living in a country like Nigeria. Sometimes we even comment that after all people get robbed even in civilised countries but we fail to mention that efforts are made to find the killers.

What is even more sickening, is that on the day Charles was gunned down, the noise of the gun shot sent nearby witnesses running for cover, and by the time they recovered and came back to the spot of the heinous crime, his fellow country men could do nothing but watch as he shrieked in pain, screaming for help with his life slowly ebbing away.

His last sights were the sorrowful faces of his countrymen who could not do anything knowing that they were probably going to be the next Charles. Even if they had rushed the victim to the hospital they may be asked to produce a police report and no one would dare go to the police fearing that they may be arrested for witnessing a robbery. So we are a society whose soul is snuffed out by a state of helplessness.

Absurdly the same spot where Charles was gunned down, the Idi Iroko bus stop is known to the police authorities and the Onigbongo Local Development Area as a crime hot spot. Just a few days after Charles was shot, residents claimed that several attacks though not fatal, had taken place at the same bus stop. The Anthony Village police station is less than 5 minutes away from the Idi Iroko bus stop but

# They Killed Him For A Laptop

amazingly there is never any police presence in that neighbourhood.

The Idi Iroko incident is not an isolated one; there are many unreported crimes in Nigeria. In August 2009, more than 20 Nigerians travelling on the Sagamu-Ore-Benin expressway lost their lives when they were crushed to death during a robbery, on the same day there was another report of 12 people shot by armed robbers along Ijebu Ode - Ore road.

In the past couple of weeks the World Wide Web has been overflowing with photographs of armed robbers allegedly ordering a luxurious driver to run over passengers who are made to stretch out on the road. If the last incidents is verified to be true, then we have lost all sense of decency and the government and those entrusted with the protection of lives and properties must up their game and live up to expectation.

No citizen of Nigeria should feel insecure and live in a permanent state of fear. The ill-fated killing of Charles Umogo-Ogbolu is unwarranted and could have been avoided if those in authority do what is right, providing the police with adequate equipment, a firm gun control mechanism that will check both the legal and illegal importation of large and small scale arms into Nigeria and tackling corruption which fuels youth unemployment and a social decadence. Insecurity is a major hindrance to growth and development and the earlier those in authority see the link the better for the Nigerian society.