

# Man killed in Onitsha as police, commercial motorcycle operators clash

**O**nitsha, a major commercial city in Anambra State was on fire yesterday, following the killing of one Mr. Felix Nwoke. He was allegedly shot dead by some unknown policemen in Ogbaru area of the state.

Reacting to the development in an interview, Dr Jim Okonkwo, chairman Board of Trustees, Motorcycle Transport Union of Nigeria (MTUN/OWAN) accused the security operatives, especially the police, of killing one of his group's executive members who, according to him, did not commit any felony.

He told the reporter: "I got a phone call that some policemen in Anambra State were battling our union members, molesting and extorting money from them. They were said to have collected N30, 000 to bail any of our members that were arrested. The thing became heavily embarrassing to our union. We wrote to the commissioner of police about this ongoing crime against our union members that has become a recurring decimal.

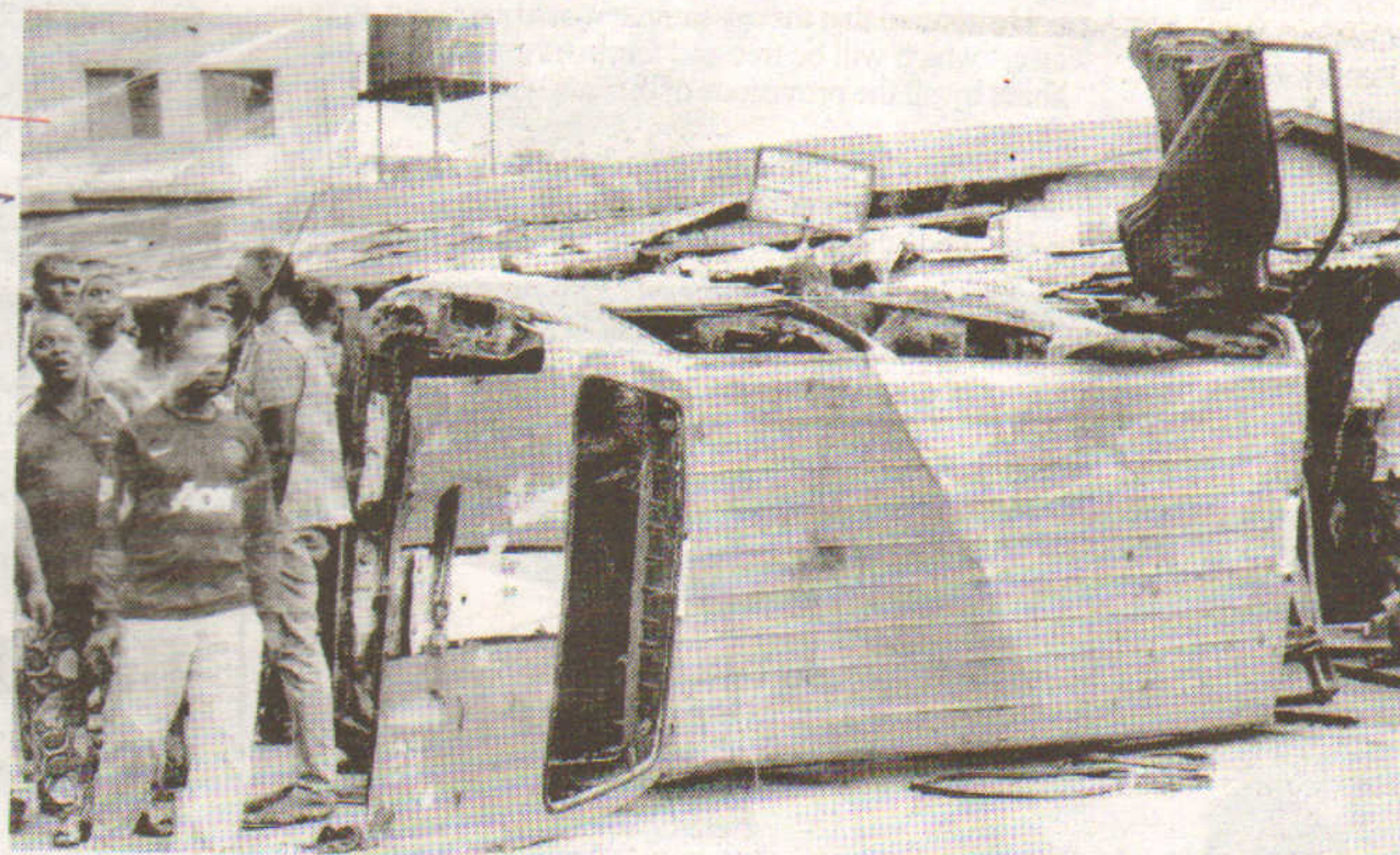
"That was some weeks ago. then I got another call that one of our executive members, Mr Felix Okonkwo was shot dead at Okpoko in Onitsha by some policemen and some people that call themselves security task force. When the incident happened, the policemen ran away with their vehicle while the task force boys that they came with abandoned their bus and ran away.

"Some people wanted to take the law into their hands and burn the vehicles, including the police station but I called on the union members not to take the law into their hands. I told them that the union would make sure that the culprit is brought to book.

"I told the state chairman to make sure that everything was brought under control and that the people should not take any rash decision. There was no further loss of life or burning of police station and vehicles."

He, however, appealed to the Inspector-General of Police and the Commissioner of Police in the state to investigate the incident.

He denied insinuations in certain quarters that members of the union were usually



• The bus allegedly abandoned by the security operatives.

unruly. Said he: "Our union is registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC). We are not robbers or kidnappers, neither are we touts as some people have erroneously tagged us."

Also speaking, the public relations officer of the union, Mr. Uche Anoliefo, condemned the killing of the late Mr. Felix Nwoke. He appealed to the Commissioner of Police in Anambra State, Mr. Hosea Hassan Karma to use his good offices to find out those behind the killing of their executive member.

Earlier, Mr. Lanre Ajetunmbi, legal adviser to the union, wondered why the police should get involved in the killing of the innocent souls. He said: "It is so unfortunate. Before now, we wrote to the commissioner of police in Anambra State in respect of the activities of some of his men and their activities in the state as well as some of their unethical attitude towards members of the union. On the 12th November, I wrote a petition to the commissioner, which we titled *Misdirection of Orders to flush out touts in Anambra*

*State*. In that petition, we made reference to the subject of touts before the commissioner. We even defined to him who the touts are. My clients are not touts. I have discussed with the commissioner and he promised that a full investigation must be conducted in this matter and those involved in the incident must be punished accordingly. We will pursue this incident using all the legal means. The police should be protecting our lives and property, not killing or extorting money from the masses."

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. James Ezech confirmed the incident and said that investigations had commenced.

He said the police in the state were out to protect lives and property. He said the deceased was actually from his hometown, Ogbunka in Orumba South Local government area of Anambra State.

He assured that the commissioner of police would ensure that all those involved in the incident would be arrested and prosecuted after the conclusion of investigation.

The Liberation Park, situated along Aku Road and which would consist of 510 lock-up shops and a motor park upon completion, is sold for N570,000 each, besides an allocation fee of N20,000.

According to Mrs. Uzor Nworgo, a trader along Aku road, while the effort is a commendable one, the cost is too expensive for an average trader to afford.

Mr. Christian Ezugwu, a chemist at Ogige market, shares similar views. "Buying one of these shops is a good investment but I couldn't secure one because I could not afford the high cost of its acquisition," he said.

Mr. Emeka Ugwu, a dealer in male clothing at Ogige market, condemned the initiative on the grounds that it bodes wrongly for them. "They are bringing bad things for us in this central market at Ogige. We traders are finding it difficult to make sales because of the numerous markets here. The markets are more than the people in this town. There is no industry here to bring job opportunities. The university is the only industry here and even that is not stable. So, the building of those shops is not a good one," he asserted.

But not all the traders are opposed to the initiative. Mr. Enete Onyeka, a trader, said he was in support of the construction. "I bought one of the shops," he stated. "The price was okay for me especially as it is a fixed price and the shop would be mine permanently, upon payment. The environment is also okay and accommodating."

Barrister Cosmos Ugwueze, the immediate past vice-chairman of Nsukka LGA, commended the projects. His words: "The Liberation Park is a mega project embarked upon by the current government to provide a one-stop shopping complex and a centralized park in the whole of Nsukka Senatorial Zone.

"The idea of this project is to have a decentralized park around it where people can trade in all sorts of products. It is also to decongest Ogige market of increasing market activities preventing free movement along Nsukka-Enugu expressway," he said.