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Police Kill FRSC Official's Son, Weeks To Birthday

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Posted on Aug 26 2016 - 1:43am by **Juliana Francis** Views: 10

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A grieving father has revealed how some policemen in Bayelsa State Police Command, killed his 17-yearold son and labeled him 'notorious armed robber.' The deceased, Innocent Kokorifa was allegedly shot and killed by policemen attached to the Anti-Vice Squad on August 18, 2016, at about 11:00am. Innocent was killed three weeks to his 18th birthday.

He recently sat for his West Africa Examination Council (WAEC) and was awaiting his result before his death.

The father of the deceased, an official of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), Mr. Daniel Kokorifa, from Okpotuwari Community of Southern Ijaw Local Government Area of Bayelsa State, said his world shattered after his wife called and told him their first son was shot dead by policemen.

The Officer in charge (OC) of the Anti-Vice Squad, allegedly labelled Innocent as armed robber after the shooting. He said Innocent was killed


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during exchange of a gun duel with policemen. Family members said that the OC reportedly told them, “we got a tipoff that there was a robbery incident going on at Air Force Road, at about 11:00am. The men of the Anti-Vice Team swung into action and confronted the robbers.

This led to a gun duel with the police and the victim was gunned down.” The police allegedly recovered a locally made gun besides the corpse of Innocent. It was alleged that the O/C Anti- Vice on getting report that a criminal was gunned down at Airforce Road, and the corpse carried to FMC mortuary, went and carried out a search of the deceased.

He claimed to have recovered wraps of Indian hemp in the pocket of Innocent. Mr. Aluzu Ebikebuna Augustine, of Faculty of Law, University of Uyo, has taken up the matter, demanding justice for Innocent, with support from Mr. Inibehe Effiong, a human rights lawyer and Convener, Coalition of Human Rights Defenders (COHRD).

Effiong said his part would be to ensure that proper investigation was carried out on the matter and justice done. Daniel, who is in his forties, was not a pretty sight to behold as he mourned his son. He wept uncontrollably. Innocent was his first child, among five kids. Daniel said: “Innocent was a loving son. The kind of child every father prays to have. He neither smoked, kept friends, nor keep late nights.

He would have marked his 18th birthday on September 9, 2016. My son had no criminal record whatsoever and until his death, he was not of a questionable character.”

According to Daniel, on that fateful day, he received a call from his wife. The distraught woman told him amidst tears that police shot and killed Innocent. He immediately instructed his wife to go to police station at Ekeki to inquire about the condition and whereabouts of Innocent.

His wife later called and told him that when she got to the police station, she cried out that police shot her son, but one of the policemen shouted and ordered her to stop saying that. The policeman reportedly said: “Do not say police shot your son, so that police would investigate the matter for you.”

Daniel said: “They admonished and coached her, that if asked who killed her son, she should say bad boys shot her son.” When Daniel got this information from his wife, he immediately left his post at Port Harcourt

by night bus and made a beeline for Bayelsa. He got to Bayelsa at about 10:00 pm that same day. He and his family went to Airforce Road, where Innocent was allegedly shot and saw a pool of blood.

On August 19, 2016, he returned to the crime scene and interviewed a woman he met at the scene. The woman told him that men of the Anti-Vice Squad came out on August 18, and shot at an unarmed boy. The woman insisted that the environment was peaceful and there was no cause for alarm until the policemen, who were in Jean and polo shirts came out and shot at the deceased. She reportedly said: "The boy fell down and became still.

The policemen prevented people from having a closer look at his corpse and threw it into their van and left." On hearing this, Daniel went to the office of Anti-Vice Squad, at Road Safety Road, but was told the man was not on seat. He was told to wait for the OC. After waiting for almost two hours, Daniel left and headed to Federal Medical Center (FMC) Yenagoa, where one of the medical doctors confirmed that a lifeless body was brought to the Emergency Unit of the hospital by members of the Anti- Vice team.

The doctor told him that the body was rejected because the victim was already dead. Daniel also went to the mortuary, where an attendant told him that a body was brought in by members of the Anti-Vice Squad team. Continuing with the story, Augustine said: "Daniel was told by the mortuary attendant that the police paid the first payment of the mortuary bill and signed the mortuary register at exactly 11:59am on August 18, 2016. Note that it took the police almost an hour to get the body to the mortuary from Okaka to FMC. The deceased was brought out by the mortuary attendant for identification after Daniel intimated him that he was the father of the deceased.

It was noticed that the deceased was hit by a bullet which perforated his oesophagus." Daniel said that Innocent, on that tragic day, according to his wife, left home to visit his aunt, Miss Gbasiemokumor Lucky, residing at the street adjacent to their house. He left home at about 10:50am. On inquiry from the O/C Anti- Vice team as to what led to Innocent's death, the O/C Anti-Vice told Daniel that there was a robbery incidence at Airforce Road, Okaka.

The Anti- Vice Squad intervened. In the course, there was exchange of gunfire which led to the death of Innocent. A pistol was allegedly

recovered by the side of the deceased. Augustine said: "It should be noted that the police didn't mention where or who was being robbed at the time, before they intervened. Okaka Estate is purely a residential area.

The O/C Anti-Vice did not state who made the distress call and what time the distress call was received. He did not also say who the armed robbers' victim was. The O/C Anti- Vice Squad also confirmed the incidence by saying that his men reported a case of robbery to him around 3:00pm and that one of the suspects was killed while two others fled."

Daniel said that policemen used to come to that environment to harass and raid innocent civilians. Those arrested would later allegedly pay N15, 000 for bail. Augustine said: " What is more worrisome is that members of the Anti- Vice Squad are yet to be arrested or detained."

He further demanded: "The police should publish the result of a ballistic test carried out on the pistol showing the last day it was shot. They should also publish the residue of gun powder on the victim's body. The police should show the finger prints of the deceased on the butt of the pistol and on the Indian hemp. A pathological test should be carried out on the deceased's body before he is buried to ascertain if there were traces of Indian hemp in his blood.

The O/C Anti-Vice should provide members of his team involved to be detained immediately while investigation is pending." He also said that the police should provide details of the distress call they received on the fateful day of the incident. He noted that residents interviewed said there was no robbery incident before the Anti-Vice men arrival.

The residents further said that they heard only one gun shot, after which men of Anti-Vice Squad carted away the dead boy. Reacting to the incident, the Bayelsa State Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), a Deputy Superintendent of Police, Mr. Asanim Butswat, said that on that fateful day, acting on a tip-off, policemen from the Anti-Vice/Anti-Kidnapping Unit, went to an uncompleted building along Airforce Road, Okaka, Yenagoa, to arrest a three mangang of notorious armed robbers. He said: "On sighting the police and in a frantic bid to escape, the robbers fired at the police. The police returned fire.

One of the suspects sustained a bullet injury, while others escaped, abandoning one locally made single barrel pistol, one live cartridge, one expended cartridge and wraps of substances suspected to be Indian hemp.”

According to him, the wounded suspect was arrested and taken to the Federal Medical Centre, for treatment, but died few hours later. “The deceased suspect was later identified as one Innocent Kokorifa. Efforts have been intensified to arrest the fleeing suspects. Investigation is ongoing, said Butswat.”

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