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Recession: Robbers Target Cyclists, Kill Father Of Three

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Commercial cyclists in Ofada area of Ogun State have blamed economic recession for the sudden increase in robbery attacks on them and snatching of motorbikes. According to them, there used to be pockets of robberies before, but since the recession, motorbikes are not only being snatched, but cyclists are now often being killed and maimed.

The latest victim, to the increasing piles of dead bodies and injured cyclists, is a father of three, Mr. Chukwuman Anthony. Anthony was stabbed to death by some suspected armed robbers, who snatched his motorbike. When Anthony's body was discovered, a knife was protruding from his chest. It's speculated that Anthony, rather than give up his only source of livelihood, engaged his attackers in fisticuffs, leading to his death.

The murder of Anthony occurred on October 9, about 8:pm. He was said to have left with two passengers who hired him to take them to Arogun community. He, however, didn't return home or go to the motorbike riders' park. Cyclists who lived to tell the story of robbers that target motorbikes, said they knew the assailants' modus operandi, since they had experienced it.

According to them, Anthony's killers would have ordered him to park a few minutes after they left the Mowe motorbike riders' park. They would also have ordered him to hand over his motorcycle key to them at gunpoint. They guessed he was stabbed to death for refusing to cooperate with the robbers. Anthony bled and died on the spot.

When our correspondent visited the home of the deceased at No. 7 Jehovah Jerreh Street, some sympathisers were praying for his family members. Mr. Mathew Uduak, the deceased's friend, said he was still reeling in shock. According to him, when Anthony rode off with the two passengers, he never knew it would be the last time he would set his eyes on him. He said: "We were together at the bus stop that fateful night."

He had already bought two loaves of bread and other items, which he said he wanted to take home to his family. He was already planning to go home, when those two passengers came. They negotiated and he set out for the journey. That was how we departed that night. Someone called me the following day, to say Anthony's passengers murdered him and took his motorbike."

A family member of the deceased, who doesn't want his name mentioned, said: "We have lost our bread winner. We were at home, waiting for him to return that night, when some of his colleagues called me on phone. They said my brother was lying on the roadside, on Ofada Road, with a knife sticking out from his chest.

We rushed to the scene and found him in a pool of his blood. We immediately reported the matter at Mowe Police Station." The relative said that the family was appealing to the Ogun State Commissioner of Police, to fish out killers of Anthony. He said that Anthony was from Ebonyi State and came to Ogun State to make a living and take care of his wife and children. Anthony's widow, Mary, said she was sleeping when her phone rang.

She picked it and was given the shattering news. She said that it was like her world crashed and time stood still. She said: "I'm at a loss for words. I just can't understand it; someone that I waved goodbye to before he left that morning. Then the phone call came and I was told my husband had been killed. I'm appealing to the Ebonyi State governor and some good spirited Nigerians to come to my aid. I don't know how on earth I'm going to fend for three kids. I'm just a young woman."

Further investigations by our correspondent showed that the rate of motorbike stealing has increased drastically in Mowe and its environs, due to the economic situation in the country. Mr. Amah Owuru, a robbery victim who lived to tell his story, said that sometimes in June, his motorcycle was snatched from him at gunpoint.

He said: “I just bought the motorcycle in June and it was stolen in June. On that fateful night, I had no money; I decided to work to get some money, with which to use to pay for ticket the following day. The first passengers were a lady and a man.

The woman alighted; I was left with the man. To my surprise, when we got to an area called Ifokonbale Street, in Mowe, the passenger suddenly brought out a pistol and pointed it at me. The time was about 9pm. He demanded my motorcycle key, Automated Teller Machine (ATM) card and the ATM Personal Identification Number (PIN). I handed everything to him without hesitation.”

Owuru said that although he immediately reported the incident to the police, the robber was never arrested and his motorbike, yet to be recovered. Corroborating Owuru’s view, Edwin Alex said: “Last year my motorcycle was also snatched at gunpoint, along Abiola Gardens, at Alausa, Ikeja. I was waiting for passengers at our park in Mowe when a lady and a man approached me. They introduced themselves as police officers.

They said I should take them to Alausa Police Station. When we got to Abiola Gardens, I was shocked when the lady whipped out a gun and ordered me to hand over my motorcycle key.” Alex continued his narration: “When I reported the incident to the police at Alausa Station, I was arrested and charged to court.

The police said that I was working with armed robbers. I spent about two years in prison before I was released. I have learnt my lesson; since

then, I don't work at night. I even advised my colleagues to desist from night work because it's dangerous." Another victim, who doesn't want his name mentioned, said he was tied, bundled and flung into the canal by robbers, after they snatched his motorcycle. He said: "I thought it was a joke that fateful afternoon when they asked me to hand over my motorcycle key to them. Initially, they didn't bring out their gun, but later did.

They tied my hands and legs, bundled and flung me into the canal. I was able to untie the rope and swarm out of the water." Mr. Taye Seimote, chairman Task Force of Amalgamated Commercial Motorcycle Riders Association, Mowe branch, said: "Some of our members were invited to Ogun State Police Command Headquarters, Elewera to fashion out ways to curtail further killings of cyclists in this area. We're working with the police to check the killings and robberies."

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States?**Taiwo Jimoh**

About the Author

