

Customs officials kill NURTW chief, other

March 9, 2017 Kunle Olayeni



- **Amosun condemns NCS men's incessant killings**

In what seems to have become a recurring decimal, officials of Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) yesterday shot dead two persons in Abeokuta, the Ogun State, while pursuing suspected smugglers.

The Customs men were said to have killed Saubana Onila, a father of four, and another person at Sowu village, on the Kobape-Siun-Sagamu Expressway when he was conveying bags of rice to some customers in Sagamu. Miffed by the brutal killing, scores of protesters stormed the state headquarters of the NCS on Quarry Road in Abeokuta, threatening to dump the remains of the late transporter on the premises.

But the Public Relations Officer of Ogun Area Command, Usman Abubakar, denied that the Customs men killed anybody in the operation. Abubakar, who spoke with our correspondent in an interview, however, said investigation into the incident was ongoing.

It was learnt that Saubana, who was formerly the chairman of National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), Grammar School Unit, Abeokuta, had conveyed some bags of rice from the popular Kuto park in the state capital. Some Customs operatives on routine patrol, however, waylaid him and allegedly opened fire at his vehicle.

This came as Ogun State Governor Ibikunle Amosun reacted to the 'recklessness' displayed by NCS men which resulted in the death of two persons. In a statement issued by the Secretary to the State Government, Taiwo

Adeoluwa, the governor said while he did not support economic sabotage, his administration would not condone needless killing and unprofessional misconduct by any law enforcement agency.

The statement reads in part: “The Ogun State Governor, Senator Ibikunle Amosun, has condemned, in strong terms, the killing of two persons by men of the Nigeria Customs Service, today at Kobape in Obafemi Owode Local Government Area of the state, along the Abeokuta-Sagamu Expressway.

“It was reported that some officers of the service, in a hot chase of a vehicle suspected to be carrying bags of rice along the expressway, shot at it, killing the driver and another person instantly.

On seeing the consequence of their action, and in apparent fear of possible reprisal by sympathisers, they immediately abandoned the chase and fled the scene.

“It took the intervention of a delegation of the state government and security agencies including the Army, police, DSS, TRACE and others, that visited the scene on the instruction of the Governor, Senator Ibikunle Amosun, CON, FCA to douse the tension created by aggrieved motorists and residents who had blocked the expressway protesting the killing thereby making the road impassable for over three hours.

“While we do not support economic sabotage, we condemn the needless killing and will not tolerate recklessness and unprofessional conduct by officers of the Customs Service.

“You will recall that only two weeks ago, the state woke up to the unpleasant news of shops of rice broken into overnight by Customs officers in a market at Sango purportedly to recover ‘smuggled’ bags of rice in questionable circumstances. While we have been trying to manage public perspective trailing that incident, this dastardly incident occurred again.”

A witness, Sola Josiah, who spoke with journalists, said five commercial vehicles loaded with 25 bags of rice each from the park were en route to Sagamu when the incident occurred. Josiah claimed that the Customs men shot at Saubana’s Mazda 626 car which made him to lose control, forcing the vehicle to somersault several times.

He alleged that the Customs men further shot the driver in cold blood and escaped from the scene. Josiah also said four other people, who sustained injuries in the incident, had been taken to an undisclosed hospital for medical attention by their relatives and sympathisers.

At the Customs office, scores of friends, associates and sympathisers mobilised themselves and conveyed the remains of the deceased in a commercial cab.

They were, however, repelled by a combined team of policemen, soldiers and officials of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), who forestalled a breakdown of law and order. The state Commissioner of Police, Ahmed Iliyasu, also led a team of senior officers to the area to restore normalcy.