

'I attacked cyclist with stone, climbed tree to watch him die'

Juliana Francis

Thirty-three-year-old Isah Hassan has revealed in chilling details, how he slammed a stone on the head of a commercial cyclist, Mohammed Baba, in order to kill and steal his motorcycle.

Hassan, while posing as a passenger, rode with the 21-year-old cyclist. While they were on the journey, Hassan brought out a hidden stone from the fold of his clothes and slammed it on the head of Baba.

Baba fell to the ground and started screaming in pains. While Baba writhed and gasped his last breath, Hassan climbed a nearby tree and proceeded to watch him die.

After Baba died, Hassan stole his motorcycle and phone. He forged documents of the motorcycle and sold it. He used proceeds from the crime to settle his debtors.

Hassan would have got away with the crime, but for operatives of the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Special Intelligence Response Team (IRT).

Recalling how he killed the cyclist, Hassan said: "On our way, I asked him to stop at a junction close to Airport Road. I pretended that I wanted to urinate; I picked a stone and hid it inside my clothes. We continued on our journey; when we got to an area where there were no houses, I hit his head with the stone. He slumped from the motorbike and started convulsing on the ground; he was also screaming in pains. I dragged his motorcycle into an uncompleted building nearby. I climbed a tree and watched him struggle on the ground for close to an hour before he died."

Hassan further said: "When I was sure he was dead, I went to a nearby farm, dug a grave and buried him before leaving with his motorcycle and phone. The time was 7:30 pm. It was already dark. That night, Baba's phone started ringing. When I picked, a woman asked where he was. She thought she was speaking with him. She said that he ought to have returned home. I first pretended that I was Baba,

but later told her that Baba had been arrested by police. I pretended to be a policeman."

Baba was a commercial cyclist, who plied Bida-Minna routes in Niger State. Speaking with the woman on October 11, 2018, Hassan lied that Baba was arrested for using his motorcycle to hit a police van. Hassan further told Baba's family that their ward was being held at A Police Division Bida.

Baba's frantic family members rushed to the police station. When they got to the station's premises, Hassan cleverly accosted them. He introduced himself as the policeman that spoke with them on the phone.

While the family members were hurling questions at Hassan, trying to know why Baba was arrested and if he was alright, Hassan asked them to get documents of Baba's motorcycle. The family members found the request strange and refused.

A police source said: "The victim's family members insisted on first seeing him before they would hand over his motorcycle documents for identification. Hassan asked Baba's relatives to leave and return the following day. He told them that his boss, who was with the key to Baba's cell, was not around."

Baba's family members were the first people to arrive the police station the following day. They couldn't locate Hassan anywhere in the station and called his line.

"He told them that he had been deployed to Lagos State. After that, he hung up and switched off his phone. The phone line became unreachable," said the police source.

The family members, through the Niger State Police Command, learnt that the mysterious Hassan was not a policeman; at least, he was not working with Niger State Command. The family started running from pillar to post, looking for Baba. They also visited spiritual homes

and spent over a million naira seeking to know the whereabouts of Baba.

Sick and tired of the search for Baba, without getting any result, the family wrote a petition to the IGP, Mohammed Adamu. The IG directed IRT detectives, headed by a Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Mr Abba Kyari, to investigate and unravel the mystery surrounding the disappearance of Baba.

A police source said: "A crack team of operatives were detailed to trail and arrest Hassan. There was a particular phone number, which the suspect had been using to call Baba's family members. Police tracked the phone. The phone belonged to one of Hassan's victims. The victim narrated how Hassan robbed him of his phone and motorbike. He provided information, which aided operatives in arresting Hassan in Bida area of Niger State. Hassan confessed to have killed and buried Baba in a bush before stealing his motorcycle and phone.



Hassan

He had earlier wanted to deny killing Baba and also insisted he didn't know the deceased. But he was confronted with facts that he communicated with Baba. After the facts were presented to him, he started singing like a bird. He took police to the shallow grave where he buried Baba."

Hassan further confessed to have killed Baba because of his inability to pay his debtors.

The suspect, who is a father of two, narrated how spending above his means and always being in debt affected his life, leading him into stealing and eventually murder.

His words: "I used to work as a driver with a haulage company based in Minna Niger State and was on N18,000 monthly salary. Something happened at the company, where I work, thus I had to leave to start riding a motorcycle.

"I ran into debt after I sold a motorcycle, which I bought on hire purchase. I had to sell the motorcycle after one of my children fell sick. One of my friends, Yahaya, who I met at Idi-Araba area of Lagos State, stood as a guarantor for me when I went to collect the motorcycle on hire purchase. We bought the motorcycle from a man that sells motorcycles. I was supposed to be paying N10,000 weekly. I had paid six times before my child fell sick. I approached my guarantor, but he said there was nothing he could do. After selling the motorcycle, I used the money to treat my child.

"I later got another haulage job, and I thought I could work, save money to pay off my debts. Unfortunately, the job didn't work out as planned. There was another man in my village, who I owed N80,000. He started threatening to unleash police on me. When his threats were too much, I relocated from my village and moved to Bida town with my family."

When his financial situation got tougher, a friend took him to money lenders. The lenders said they could only assist him with N10,000. The friend, who took him to the lenders, collected N2,000 as commission from the N10,000 loan. He was asked to be refunding N1,100 every week, to total N12,000 within a 10-week span.

Hassan said: "I took the money and left the place disappointed. On my way out, I saw a motorcycle operator and asked him to take me to several places, after which I paid him. We later exchanged phone numbers. Later that day, I called and told him to take me to Chachar Road in Bida. Before then, I had cut some cartons into the shape of naira notes. I placed a N1,000 note on end of the last 'notes'. I wrapped them with a nylon bag, making it look like wads of money. I deliberately asked him to pick me in front of a bank, while I clutched the nylon bag. We later headed towards Chachar Road.

"On getting to a spot on that Road, I acted as if I was looking for the Imam in that area. I pretended to be calling and receiving direction from Imam. I asked the cyclist to help me with his motorcycle and phone, while I handed him my supposed 'bag of money' to keep for me. I mounted his motorcycle and zoomed off. I sold the motorcycle for N80,000. I sent N30,000 to the man I owed in Lagos and used N50,000 to pay the man I owed in my village."

daughter - Father of slain INEC employee

LGA, Omodo - the CSO Akuku Toru LGA and Kenneth of Kula currently at large were the masterminds of the unexpected/unprovoked attack."

It will be recalled that a soldier was also killed in Abonnema.

But the Rivers State Civil Society Organizations, in a statement, signed by Dr. Sotonye George, appealed to the international community to intervene in the killing of innocent citizens by soldiers during the election.

The group in a statement said: "The presence and operations of the military with party stalwarts at the collation centres and polling units ignited violence that led to the death of several persons including a youth corps member and an ad-hoc staff of INEC in Rivers State.

"We cautioned, prior to the elections, that the military has no business been involved in an election as their constitutional duty is to defend and protect the territorial integrity of Nigeria against external aggression. It is on record that a federal high court had earlier made a landmark judgement clearly stating that it is unconstitutional and illegal to use the military for

election duties.

"Sustained military operations were witnessed in several parts of the state on the Election Day. Soldiers practically took over the conduct of the elections, leading to stoppage in distribution of electoral materials and snatching/hijacking of electoral materials, also disrupted voting and chased away voters from some voting centres."

Also, the In-Party Ad-



Isbaki's father

visory Council (IPAC) condemned the killing, noting that the killings would not have happened if the army had displayed professionalism in its conducts.

The state's Public Relations Officer of IPAC, Comrade Kukang Ledum Joseph, made this declaration at a press conference in Port Harcourt.

He said: "By brazenly betraying the public trust, the army can no longer be trusted by the people of Rivers State to be neutral in the electoral process.

"Clearly, the army has become a threat not only to the holding of peaceful, free and credible election, but also to the survival of democracy in Rivers State and therefore should be excluded from participating howsoever in the governorship and House of Assembly elections in Rivers."

Joseph added: "Saturday February 23, 2019, will forever remain in the memory of Rivers people as a black and bloody Saturday in the election history of the state simply because the army decided to be overtly partisan in breach of their abiding duty to be neutral and provide security for the electoral process."