

Crime

Taiwo Jimoh

Direct accusation against taskforce

Motorcycle riders at the Second Rainbow bus stop, on the Apapa-Oshodi Expressway, Lagos, have accused officials of the Lagos State Taskforce of killing an innocent man who operates a Point of Sales (POS) in the area.

The angry motorcycle riders who spoke with our correspondent when he visited the scene on Tuesday insisted that it was the taskforce officials who shot the innocent man identified simply as Toba at the bus stop.

The policemen had gone to the area to enforce the ban on commercial motorcycles on that route when the unfortunate tragedy struck.

According to a motorcycle rider, Aliyu, he was at the bus stop with some of his colleagues who were also motorcyclists waiting for passengers when some boys working for the taskforce came and started dragging their bikes with them.

He said before they realised what was happening, the taskforce officials who were also coming from behind started shooting sporadically and Second Rainbow bus stop being a busy place, where people board buses to their various destination, it was in the process that stray bullets from the policemen hit one Toba who was operating Point of Sales (POS), close to the Expressway.

Eye witnesses insist it is taskforce

He said: "How can they claim it was not them who killed the innocent man, it was when the policemen attempted to impound bikes from us, but we resisted them, that was what prompted the policemen to start shooting sporadically, apparently to disperse us and move our bikes and we were over 100 at the bus stop. Majority of us are from Michika in Adamawa State, but we have few from other northern part of the country.

"It was war in the North that forced us into riding bikes in Lagos and we see Lagos as our second home, if we are chased away from here we have no other place to go, because even the East is also not secure, we are law abiding citizens of Nigeria, Lagos government should have mercy on us, we don't want to die of hunger. When peace returns to the North we are going to return.

"What most people don't understand about us is that those of us who work at the Second Rainbow bus stop have each other contacts and we know each other, we don't just allow anybody to join us without scrutinising such a person. These are policemen who used to come to the bus stop on daily basis to collect money from us. The money is called 'Security Money'. A lot of us sustained injuries in the process and even some people who were standing at the bus stop were not spared."

The gunshots from the taskforce officials was said to have caused a stampede at the bus stop as everybody took to their heels to avoid further disaster. Motorists abandoned their vehicles and fled for safety, some with roadside traders who also abandoned their wares at the mercy of hoodlums who hijacked the opportunity.

It was gathered that when the taskforce officials realised the magnitude of their action, they left the scene hurriedly with three truckloads of impounded motorcycles. While the body of the victim who was clad in a multi-coloured shirt on black and white pants and bag stripped to his back was still lying in the pool of his blood, with sympathisers clustering around him.

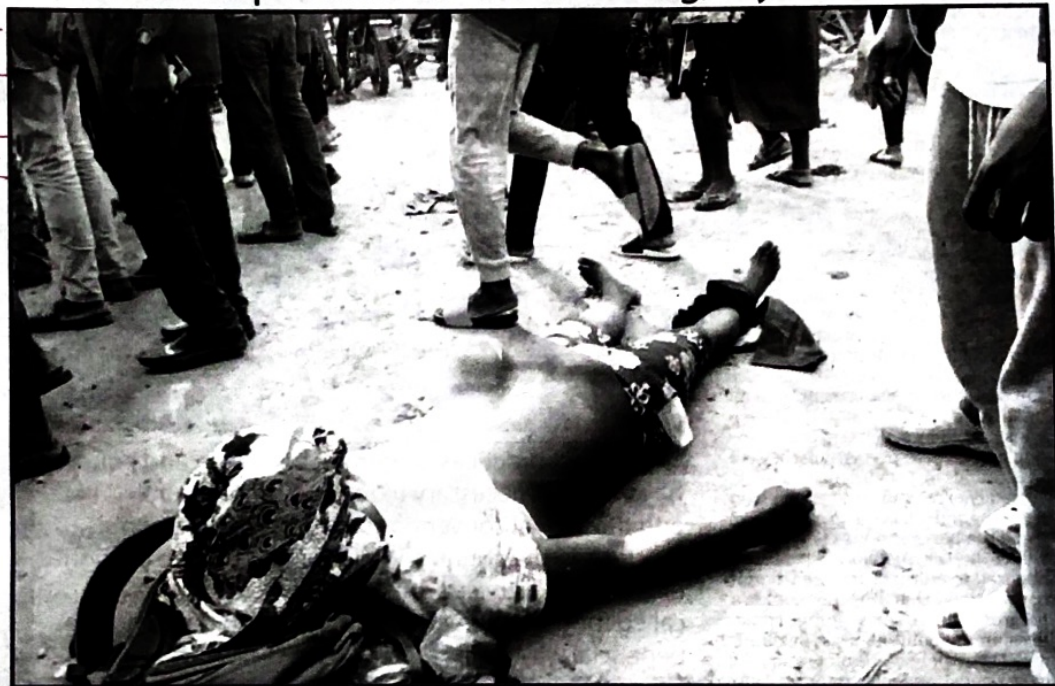
Meanwhile, armed policemen were seen stationed at the police post close to the bus stop to prevent angry youths from invading it.

Bereaved Mother Inconsolable

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Okada Ban: How Taskforce's stray bullets allegedly killed POS operator

●W're not responsible for the shooting, says taskforce



The late Toba

When our correspondent visited the victim's house at Ijesha, it was gathered that his mother had been taken to another family members' house at Ikotun. But some residents condemned the act of the operatives of the taskforce who denied killing the innocent boy who was fending for his mother and his siblings through the POS work he was doing.

One of the victim's neighbours who gave his name as Ayeni, said it was unfortunate that stray bullet hit the innocent boy who was struggling to survive.

He said it was the deceased, his siblings and mother that are living together. "Majority of us were not at home when the incident occurred, it was when we returned at night I got to know that such magnitude of incident occurred. It was unfortunate that such a hard working person could die in such a manner.

"The deceased was a graduate, it was because he couldn't secure a job on time that was why he decided to venture into POS business and he was doing well. I knew it was at Second Rainbow Bus Stop where he works, because of the traffic of people plying that area. It was unfortunate that policemen who went to impound motorcycles cut his life short. His mother had been taken to another family member's house at Ikotun. I don't know how the old woman will feel now? It was a very pathetic incident."

Another motorcycle rider who simply identified himself as John said, in 2018 seven of their members were killed at Itire by policemen from Itire Police Station.

"The persecution we are facing in Lagos is much, fine it is true that there are bad eggs among us, it is not that we all are bad, but some of us it is survival that forced us to come to Lagos because of the insecurity in the North.



CP Abiodun Alabi

Give us alternative means of livelihood, operators plead

"If Lagos State doesn't want us on the road again, at least we are Nigerians they should provide us with alternative means of survival. We don't have another means of taking care of ourselves and those who depend on us. The boy that was killed I knew him very well. I used to send money from him to my parents in the North. Now police are denying killing the young man. God in his infinite mercy will console the parents of the victim. While, I was trying to speed up, my bike was seized from me. Right now I don't have another bike to work with.

"A lot of my colleagues sustained varying degrees of injuries when they were trying to escape from the scene with their bikes. Unfortunately the taskforce officials went away with three truckloads of bikes to their office. Fine, it is true that is ban on bike in Lagos where we operate, we are not on the road. We operate on the other side of the road to avoid gridlock, we don't operate on the main road."

Taskforce denies any wrongdoing

However, the Lagos State Taskforce has denied their involvement in a shootout at Second Rainbow Bus Stop in Amuru Odofin during an enforcement for compliance exercise which led to the death of a young man.

Mr. Gbadeyan Abdurrahman, Director, Press & Public Affairs, Taskforce, reacting to the incident said the Chairman of the Agency, CSP Shola Jejeloye who led the operation said that there is no iota of truth in the claim, that the operation carried out was smooth and seamless up to the point when the team left the scene.

"Activities of the Lagos State Taskforce are carried out with the highest degree of civility and caution, because we are dealing with human lives in our operations. We have been to Second Rainbow more than three times this year to carry out enforcement operations and have never recorded any injuries, talk more of loss of life. There was no provocation at all during the exercise, so the claim that we fired live ammunition at okada operators is completely false.

"It is better to let 20 guilty traffic offenders escape than let one innocent individual lose his life and that is how we operate. The Chairman always address the officers and men on the high level of compliance towards the ban on okada operators across the state, there is no need for us to fire live rounds at harmless okada operators. If things get heated up, the maximum action we can take is to fire teargas canisters into the air to disperse them. Firing live rounds is excessive and it was not from any member of the Agency.

"The stray bullet might have come from other security operatives (not Lagos State Taskforce) who ran into the mob after we had left. Jejeloye promised to carry on with his operations to ensure that the state remains safe, clean and habitable for all."