

Ogun Govt Condemns Ihunbo Tragedy as Customs Condoles Family

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Dapo Abiodun

Idowu Sowunmi

Ogun State Governor, Prince Dapo Abiodun, yesterday condemned the death of three students allegedly killed by the vehicle of the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS) on Monday, saying his administration would investigate the circumstances surrounding the matter.

This was coming as the NCS Ogun State Command has expressed regrets over the unfortunate incident and condoled with the families of the affected persons.

The governor, while reacting to the development in a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Kunle Somorin, expressed shock over the sad news of the death of three students of Ojumo Community High School, Ihunbo in Ipokia Local Government Area of the state and warned security operatives chasing suspected smugglers or hoodlums to be wary of the rights of citizens in all circumstances.

He said: "We respect the sanctity of human lives in Ogun State and government exists to provide security and welfare for the people. No matter the circumstances, we found this condemnable. We would not fold our arms and watch our future leaders killed in that manner."

The students, according to reports, had just closed from school, when they were reportedly hit by a vehicle being driven by an NSC official in hot chase of suspected smugglers.

While three students were reportedly killed, other students and market women were also said to have sustained varying degrees of injuries as the Customs officials chased suspected smugglers.

The governor said it was reprehensible that young children with promising futures could be lost in such circumstance, adding that the state government would not just investigate the circumstances of the gory killings of these potential leaders of tomorrow, but would do everything possible to prevent a recurrence and would ensure that indicted persons are brought to justice.

Abiodun prayed God to "grant the families of these innocent children the fortitude to bear the loss" and pleaded with the people not to take laws into their hands in dealing with the unfortunate situation.

The governor, however, advised security personnel, especially NCS officials to apply moderate engagements with suspected smugglers or hoodlums along the border towns to avoid such loss of lives and property in future.

Meanwhile, NSC Ogun State Command has issued a counter-statement, explaining that only one student died in the incident.

The command, in a statement by its Public Relations Officer, Abdullahi Maiwada, said: "On Monday, 07th October, 2019 at about 1330Hours, Officers of Nigeria Customs Service Ogun Command on routine patrol arrested a vehicle (Mercedes Benz ML) suspected to have been smuggled into Nigeria.

"In the process of conveying the said vehicle driven by an Officer of the Service fully escorted by official patrol vehicle, an okada man conveying a passenger crossed their path. In a swift response by the driver to avoid collusion with the said okada rider, he lost control

and rammed into some group of people coincidentally on a market day of Ihunbo Community.

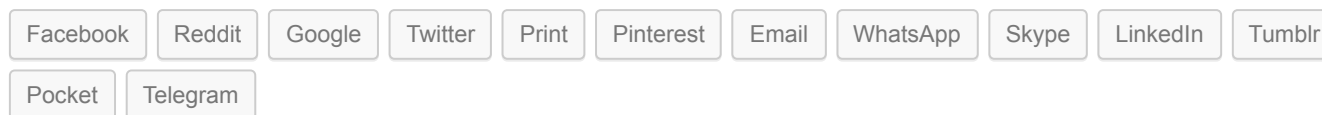
“Unfortunately one of the victims a twenty years old student of Ojumo Community Secondary School by name Opeyemi Odusinan instantly died and three people sustained various degrees of injuries. As at the time of filling this report, two of the injured have been discharged with only one Sunday Adeniyi (Adult male Nigerian) receiving treatment at General Hospital Idiroko.”

added: “It is on this premise that the Command wishes to register its deep heartfelt condolences to the family, school and friends of this young and promising child who lost his life in this unfortunate circumstances. We strongly commiserate with you in this trying moment and it is our prayer that God will give you the fortitude to bear this irreparable loss. The Command is also working assiduously to cater for the injured and to cushion the effect of this unintentional tragedy.

“It is however important to condemn some mischief makers who hijacked the situation and attacked Customs vehicles within sight in a community known for upholding peace and rule of law.”

While noting that normalcy has since been returned with the intervention of the police, military personnel and other sister security agencies, the Customs spokesperson reiterated the command’s “sincere sympathy as this is purely an accident and not the narrative of str

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