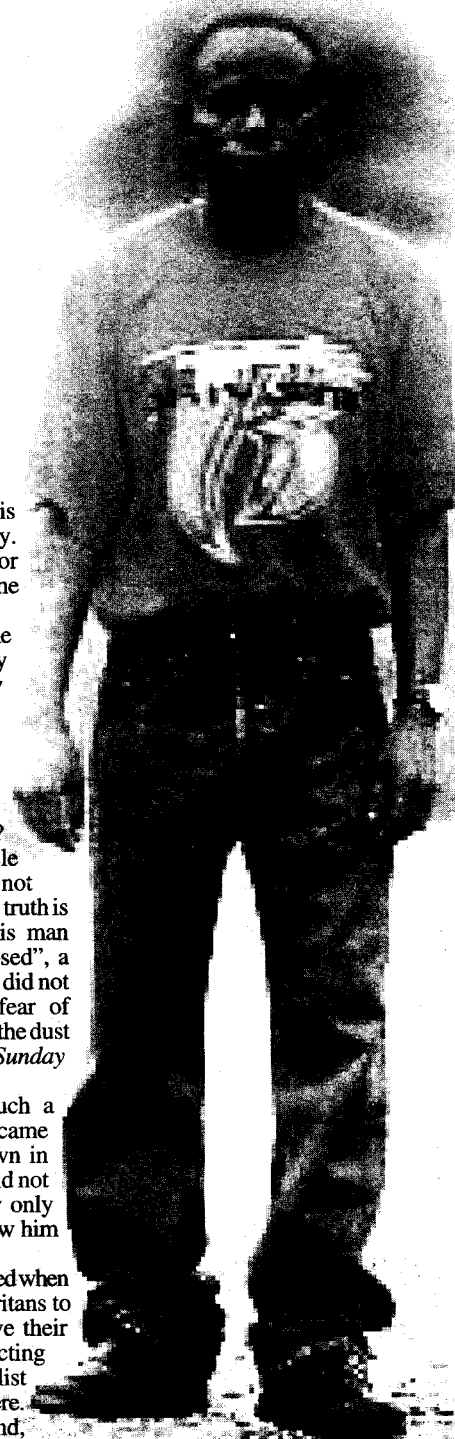


VISTA

EMMA AMAIZE, *Regional Editor South-South*

# Posers over unlucky Lucky's alleged murder

- Police killed him — *Family, rights group*
- 'He slumped at checkpoint and died'



Lucky

WHO killed Lucky Enaohwo, father of two and student of Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Enugu at Upper Erejuwa Road, Warri, Delta State July 15? Was Lucky, a young man who worked with his motorcycle to raise money to take care of his family, murdered by policemen at a checkpoint because he refused to give them N20 bribe, as claimed by some people? Or did he suddenly slump on his motorcycle near the checkpoint, only for the policemen who rushed to give him helping hand to be accused of his death as claimed by the police authorities in the state?

What actually happened to Lucky on that day that led to his death is a source of disagreement between the police, his family and the Warri-based Human Rights Defenders Organization of Nigeria (HURDON). But what is not in controversy is that Lucky who left his pregnant wife and two children at home that fateful day with a promise of coming back is stone dead and his corpse is lying in the morgue of the Central Hospital in the oil city.

Besides HURDON, the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR) in the state, led by Mr. Oghenejabor Ikimi, has raised dust over the death of Lucky. Ikimi alleged that the policemen who killed the motorcyclist should be arrested and prosecuted for murder. According to him, the people who spoke to him confirmed that it was the policemen that beat the deceased to death. He said it was normal for the police to cover their men but it was wrong for anybody to cover the reasons that led to the death of a law-abiding citizen of the country or fail to bring his killers to justice.

The CDHR boss said his organization had for a long time been warning about the illegal activities of policemen extorting money from people at checkpoints in the state, saying that the inspector general of police, Mr. Sunday Ehindero, should probe the matter if the police command in the state could not fish out the culprits.

Delta State commissioner of police, Mr. Udom Ekpoudom, who described the incident as unfortunate, exonerated his men from the death of Lucky. He said that the policemen only saw the victim from their duty point collapsing and as people whose primary responsibility was to protect and save life, they rushed to his rescue, only for the man to die later. He explained that there were eyewitnesses who gave evidence as to what happened and expressed shock that instead of commending the policemen for being their brother's keeper, some motorcyclists who soon gathered attacked them, stole their rifle and set a police van ablaze.

The police arrested 17 persons in connection with arson, murder, stealing and beating of the policemen. Two of

them, said the commissioner, were on danger list at an undisclosed hospital in the state. The arrested persons were all remanded in prison custody on the order of a court in the state when they were arraigned about a fortnight ago.

Those arrested and charged to court were Godwin Anaye, Olufeni Arowosegbe, Azubuike Mbegbu, Chukwudi Anele, Ifeanyi Okanu, Akpomede Aghoghovbia, Azuka Onyian, Ochuko Makaro, Michael Akpomalue, Lukeman Mustapha, Patrick Uduwve, Omoshehi Orobato, Emoh Ekpo, Musa Jubril, John Imosis and Gbesimi Fregene.

They were accused of attempting to murder Corporals Emmanuel Okoh, Monday Omondigie, Inspector Ganiyu Sadiku and Police Constables Utibeong Ezekiel and Elaigwu Barnabas by hitting them with dangerous weapons, as well as setting ablaze a police patrol van, model Peugeot 505 saloon car with registration number, Lagos AJ 471 KJA. The last count is that they stole one police rifle with 10 rounds of ammunition and FNC rifle with 10 rounds of live ammunition from Corporals Emmanuel Okem and Monday Omoudigun respectively.

But, D'Zebra Consult, a firm of legal practitioners and notary public, in a letter signed by Mr. C.D.S. Omon-Irabor, dated July 20, to the commissioner of police, said that the deceased, who was on industrial attachment with Songhai Delta, Amukpe, was going about his motorcycle riding business at Upper Ereduwa in Warri when he was brutally murdered by some policemen for refusing to give the policemen N20, which they were collecting as toll at a road block they mounted.

"The motor bike which the deceased rode at the time of his murder with registration number, DT 6594 M, and his handset, Nokia 7210 with GSM number, 08033727437, got missing during the incident and yet to be found. We therefore write you to please use your good office to do an in-depth investigation on this matter and bring to book the culprits", he said.

Expectedly, the police opposed the bid to grant the suspects bail but HURDON wrote the chief judge of the state July 26 to say that the police misled the office of the chief judge to grant assumption of jurisdiction in Asaba to enable them send them to prison in a place where they would not be able to communicate with their relations.

The facts of the matter, according to the HURDON's letter, jointly signed by the national chairman, Mr. Irabor and the national secretary, Mr. Reward Ojekhekpen are that, "On the 15th day of July, 2006, the parents of Lucky Enaohwo came to complain to our office that their son was murdered by the police at Upper Erejuwa Road, Warri for refusing to give N20 bribe at a checkpoint. There was uproar and some people were alleged to have beaten some policemen and burnt down a vehicle. A day later, the police arrested some people in various part of Warri, especially those whose shops were located around the scene and some Okada riders. Seventeen people were arrested and taken to Asaba and detained. We applied for bail but the police refused and misled the office of the chief judge to granting assumption of jurisdiction in Asaba to enable them send them to prison in Asaba where they cannot even communicate with their relations".

In another letter, dated July 27, to the attorney general of the state calling for his intervention, HURDON stated that passersby and other sympathizers protested the murder of Lucky by the police and, in the process, some policemen were alleged to have been beaten up by a mob and a vehicle set ablaze. The human rights group, however, added: "A day later, innocent people were arrested and taken to Asaba. While we were at Asaba trying to resolve the issue with the police commissioner, they were arraigned on eight-count charges of attempted murder and arson at Magistrate Court II, Asaba and subsequently remanded in prison custody".

"Sir, the police cannot kill, maim, arrest

and prosecute their own case. This is injustice that can lead to anarchy. Kindly intervene", Omon-Irabor and Ojekhekpen appealed in the one-page petition.

While the legal fireworks over the death of Lucky is on, not many from the point of view of morality are comfortable with the theory and coincidence of a motorcyclist slumping and dying at a police checkpoint without the police touching him. "Why must he collapse at a police checkpoint? He was riding the motorcycle before he got there. Why did he not collapse before then? The simple truth is that the policemen attacked this man with their batons and he collapsed", a resident at the Erejuwa area who did not want his name on print for fear of victimization by the police when the dust would have settled told *Sunday Vanguard*.

But Ekpoudom dismissed such a claim. He said that eyewitnesses came to testify and they wrote it down in black and white that the police did not beat the deceased and that they only went to assist him when they saw him slump.

Omon-Irabor, however, wondered when the police turned to good Samaritans to the extent that they would leave their duty post where they were collecting money to attend to motorcyclist that slumped on his own somewhere. He said if the police were that kind, why is it that they see corpses of dead people on the road and leave them?

The unfortunate aspect of the saga is that eye witnesses do not, curiously, want to come out and speak publicly on what transpired on that day. A source, nevertheless, argued that the mob would not have descended on the policemen and set a police van ablaze if the policemen were really good Samaritans as the police authorities were claiming.

*Sunday Vanguard* was told that one of the policemen that was beaten by the mob was overheard warning his colleague who started the beating of the deceased to be careful, as he was not ready to answer

any question in the case of any eventuality. It was also gathered that the particular policeman that started the pummeling with his baton slapped an *Okada* rider two weeks before the incident at the same checkpoint and the man fainted.

In all, the police are claiming innocence of the accusation against them and, as it were, the judiciary is the only hope of the accused persons, the family of the deceased, his wife, two children, a boy and a girl, as well as the unborn child his wife is carrying.