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## Okada riders destroy bank in Benin over police killing of colleague

Written by Simon Ebegbulem  
Monday, 19 January 2009

HELL was let loose last Thursday in Benin City, after a commercial motorcycle operator, Monday Edigbonya, was shot dead by a trigger happy mobile police officer, attached to a new generation bank in the city.

Few minutes after the ugly incident which provoked the ire of commercial motorcycle operators popularly known as Okada, there was pandemonium at Mission Road where the bank was located as avalanche of Okada operators descended on the bank.

The glass house bank was destroyed with stones and other metals by the angry Okada riders as they engaged the anti-riot mobile policemen deployed in the area by the state Commissioner of Police, Mr. Danlami Yar'Adua, to quell further destruction in a physical combat.

They were about setting the bank ablaze when the Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs), were rolled out by the police authorities to disperse them.

Even with the presence of fierce looking mobile police men, they remained defiant and were ready to die with their colleague. The Okada men were not deterred as they protested round the streets of Benin, including Government House, where they appealed to Governor Adams Oshiomhole who vowed at his inauguration speech that no police will kill again in the state and go free.

Barely two weeks ago, after several pleas from the Okada operators in the state that the time of their operation be extended, Comrade Governor heeded to their plea and extended the time from 7pm to 7:30pm. And when this ugly incident happened, the Governor was away to Abuja for a meeting with other governors and the Presidency but the Okada riders left a message for him at the Osadebey Avenue that one of their own was shot unjustly and the run away suspect must not go unpunished.

How the incident happened

An eyewitness told Vanguard that the incident happened when

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the deceased Monday dropped a passenger at the front of the bank and while "arguing with the passengers on how much he should pay, the mobile police man came out and ordered the Okada man to leave the place.

So they started arguing. The passenger was still exchanging words with the Okada man. We noticed that the Okada man refused to leave the place because he was yet to collect his money from the passenger when the mobile policeman who was very angry now shot at him".

It was said that after shooting the Okada rider, one of the mobile policemen attached to the bank was angry with his colleague for shooting the Okada man and demanded for his rifle but the suspect who the police authorities said had vanished warned his colleague to be calm or he will shoot him also.

Consequently, the Okada riders re-grouped and stormed the bank. All the policemen attached to the bank including the suspect took to their heels leaving the dead body on the road.

They set fire on the bullion van and two vehicles packed at the bank and were about setting the entire building ablaze when truck load of Mobile policemen stormed the place, with tear gas and shooting sporadically to disperse the angry commercial motorcycle operators. Though the angry Okada riders were not able to set the bank ablaze but the bank was badly touched.

In a swift reaction, the Inspector General of Police, Mr. Mike Okiro ordered for the full investigation of the matter. The Police Public Relations Officer, ASP Peter Ogboi who disclosed this to newsmen in Benin City, said the IG who was disturbed by the incident, had ordered for the full investigation of the matter and ordered that the officer be fished out by the Compol unit 5 and the CID of the state Command.

He said the body of the deceased had been deposited in an undisclosed mortuary, adding that "Investigation into the matter has been ordered by the IG, the CID will investigate and tell us their findings .Was the man killed wrongly?

Or was the policeman acting in whatever form, was it lawful that he should use his arm or was it unlawful that he use his firearm, all that will be questions for the CID to resolve and I think they will resolve it very soon".

On the identity of the policeman that pulled the trigger, Ogboi said the state Commissioner of Police, Danlami Yar'Adua had ordered the state Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and the officer in charge of MOPOL unit 5 to fish him out, "and that will be complied with.

Efforts will also be made by these two officers to ensure that he is arrested .

Father of the deceased, 58 year-old Patrick Edigbonya called on the police to ensure that the killer of his son was brought to book. He lamented that since the incident happened they have not been allowed to see the corpse of his son as according to him none of the family members have been allowed to see the body of his son.

However, the protest continued last Friday and Saturday, but

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the hundreds of battle ready mobile policemen cordoned off the entire Mission Road to avoid the protesters from setting the bank ablaze.

Vanguard however learnt that the Okada riders have made up their mind to set the bank ablaze unless the suspect is apprehended. But their expectation that the fleeing mobile police officer would be arrested may be a mirage if the incident that occurred last year's August, 2008, at the NNPC mega station in Benin City, where a 32 year-old man was shot dead by a mobile policeman attached to the station after a heated argument, is some thing to go by.

The incident which forced the Ogbelaka youths outside the streets of Benin, caused pandemonium too, as the youths stormed the mega station to burn it down. But a combined unit of security agents including soldiers saved the situation. The deceased was not buried until late November, 2008, because the family and elders of Ogbelaka insisted that the police officer whom the police authorities in Benin claimed they are unaware of his whereabouts, be produced before they could commence the burial ceremony.

And up till today, the police officer is yet to be arrested and the situation had led to occasional scarcity of fuel in the City because the Mega station is yet to commence operations.

Vanguard was reliably informed that the management of the filling station was yet to pay adequate compensation to the family of the deceased and the Ogbelaka community. One of the conditions they gave was that the run away cop be produced by the police so that he could face prosecution.

And because they are yet to comply with the conditions, the filling station has remained closed, giving the independent marketers of Petroleum product in the state the opportunity to exploit people by either creating artificial scarcity of the product so that they can sell at an exorbitant price or adjust their meters.

However, the situation in the state now is quite different because there is a new government. Considering the huge support that was given to the Comrade Governor while he was battling for his stolen mandate at both the Election Petition Tribunal and the Appeal Court, it is expected that Governor Oshiomohle would demand for the prosecution of the mobile police officer who shot Monday last Thursday. A

nd the earlier the suspect is produced and prosecuted the better for the people of the state at least to serve as deterrent to other police officers in the state and the nation as a whole. And for the Okada operators in Edo state, this is their government and it is their belief that they can no longer be intimidated in the state.

And any body that has been monitoring events in the state since the ascension of Comrade Oshiomohle as Governor, would notice that the Association of Commercial motorcycle operators has been more powerful, even more than some top government officials in the state.

It has been observed that some top government officials find it difficult to reach the Governor to discuss certain issues because the Governor relates with some of them with suspect. But for

the Okada operators in the state, they always have the ears of the Governor who on several occasions have breached protocol to drive out himself to see things the way they are in town without relying on reports from his aides.

Therefore, no matter how fast or how far the killer cop may thought he had ran, he may not go unpunished based on the earlier warnings by the Governor. This is going to be the first acid test for the new Edo Commissioner whose predecessor, Chris Dega was relieved of his commissionership in a very controversial manner because the Comrade Governor would not want to fail in his campaign promises.

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