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VANGUARD

Nigeria: How Police Killed Man for Allegedly Stealing a Goat

Susan Edeh

10 June 2010

Bauchi — Life will never be the same for the wife and four children of Aliyu Basarka, a resident of Basarka village in Darazo local government of Bauchi State. This is because the man, aged 30, recently gave up the ghost after he was allegedly brutalized by men of the Nigeria Police Force.

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This heart-rendering story unfolded on May 28, 2010 when the deceased, having bought a goat from a village market, set out to go back home. Not long after he had left the village market, a commercial motorcyclist, otherwise known as Okada, accused him of stealing his goat. This accusation led to an argument between the

Okada man and Aliyu with the latter insisting that they should go back to the market where he bought the goat to prove to him that he was not a thief.

The deceased further reported the matter to the district head of the village who promised to settle the matter between him and the Okada man after a closed door meeting with the elders of the village. But unknown to Aliyu, the Okada man went on to report the matter to a policeman who later set out to apprehend him.

Later on that same fateful day, the deceased in company of his friend went to a nearby filling station to buy fuel for his bike where they coincidentally met the district head of the village on his way to Bauchi town. The District Head advised the deceased to go to the police station to report the matter and make a statement. Little did the District Head know that was going to be the last time he would set his eyes on him.

Moments after the District Head departed for Bauchi, the deceased and his friend were on their way to the police station to lay their complaint when this policeman who was misinformed about the matter by the Okada man tried to arrest him.

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According to an eye witness, Aliyu on sighting the policeman, panicked and took to his heels, with the policeman chasing after him. The eye witness further stated that at that point the police used a stick to hit him, causing the deceased to fall to the ground. The ensuing scuffle between the deceased and policeman attracted bystanders who erroneously assumed that the deceased was fighting with the policeman. This led to information being passed to the colleagues of the policeman who rushed to the scene of the scuffle. On getting to the place, the policemen insisted that the deceased followed them to the station.

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the policemen insisted, and started beating him up mercilessly and dragging him on the ground to and fro. I pleaded with them to stop beating him, but my



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pleas fell on deaf ears".

This action by the police eventually led to the death of Aliyu. On discovering that he had died, the police took the corpse to the station and claimed that there was an accident that led to his death. Later that day, they took the lifeless body of Aliyu to Darazo General Hospital where an examination was carried out on the body to find out the cause of death.

When Vanguard Metro visited the Hospital in Darazo to verify the claim by the police that Aliyu died in an accident, the medical officer of the hospital, Mohammed Bello said the contrary was the case. According to him: "There was no sign of gunshot or bleeding from his nostrils. There was also no sign of dislocation or stabbing with a knife. From my observations, the deceased was inflicted with injuries as a result of continuous beating".

The submission of the medical officer may not be far from the truth as according to him, some people from the village where Aliyu (the deceased) hailed from, came out in their hundreds to protest the brutal killing of the deceased by the policemen. They claimed that they heard all that happened and that justice must prevail.

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When contacted for his comment on the unfortunate incident, the Chairman of Darazo local government, Alhaji Mohammed Sabo said it was an unfortunate situation. He said: "After I received the shocking news, I called for an urgent security meeting in a bid to calm the situation. I also, with a matter of urgency, organised a sensitization workshop in which I called on the youths in the area not to take the laws into their hands. I assured them that an investigation would be made into the case".

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Reacting to the death of his son, the father of the deceased, Mallam Sani Basarka who spoke to our correspondent in Hausa language said he was at the motor park when he received the news of the tragic incident. He immediately made for the hospital where he said he saw the body of his son with injuries all over it as a result of the beatings by the policemen. The father said: "I want this matter to be investigated. I want justice for my son and also want the police to compensate my family because my son has a wife and four children".

In his reaction to the case, the Bauchi State Police Command, speaking through its PPRO, said it was aware of the case, but debunked the allegation that the deceased died as result of body injuries inflicted on him by policemen. The PPRO stated thus: "There was a complaint leveled against the deceased accusing him of stealing goats and when the police set out to apprehend the deceased, he panicked, ran and fell into a ditch, thereby sustaining injuries that led to his death".

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