

# Crime Alert

## A rage in Isolo

### • Over death of two Okada riders

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and EVELYN USMAN

THE Ejigbo/Ikotun Egbe road is synonymous with daily heavy traffic jam; no matter the hours of the day. No thanks to the narrowness of the road that is replete with potholes occasioned by the nonchalance and insensitivity of the council authorities. It was therefore, common sight for motorists and motorbikes operators popularly called *Okada* to drive against traffic to the consternation and detriment of other road users just to beat time. Not even the heavy presence of the regular combined team of officials of the Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA) and policemen from Ejigbo and Isolo Divisions made any meaning to these traffic violators and they meander and drive recklessly through the topsyturvy road. However, this show of recklessness and flagrant disregard for traffic law came to a head last Thursday after an *Okada* ride rammed into a fast moving car in a head-on collision; resulting in an instant death of the rider. Venue was *Pako* bus-stop by the *Oka-Afa* decrepit bridge. The incident brought commercial and social activities at the area to an abrupt end as sympathizers of the deceased *Okada* rider went wild protesting police release of the motorist instead of compelling him to bear burial expenses.

The rampaging motorcyclists who were mainly from the Mushin end of the Isolo road barricaded *Pako*, thereby hampering both human and vehicular movements into the Low Cost Housing estate, Oke Afa, Ejigbo, Ikotun, Aba-ronje, Ijegan, Isheri and other neighboring suburbs.

The protesters who openly confronted armed policeman controlling traffic at the area later set a police bus stationed at the junction ablaze and even attacked and injured some policemen who in the process. In the ensuing uncontrollable and violent protest a motorist who was escaping from the area also ran over another *Okada* operator and the situa-



• Pix shows policemen at the scene of the riot with the police van set ablaze.

tion became even more chaotic.

#### What went wrong?

Trouble started after a fully loaded commercial bus popularly known as *Molue*, driving inward *pako*, knocked down a motorcyclist that was speeding directly toward the oncoming *Molue* in a head collision. The victim identified as Jimoh Akeem, a resident of Ikotun died on the spot as his head smashed by the heavy tyres of the *Molue*. Expectedly, the po-

was on the wrong, the driver of the commercial bus was allowed to go and this did not go down well with other motorcyclists who were full of expectation from the police. This action of the police sparked off a mob action as every motorcyclist stopped at the scene of crime and dragged the bus driver of the bus down. Passengers in the bus struggled to get out when it became apparent that the mob was going to set the vehicle ablaze. Driver of the vehicle and his conductor including the bus with plate number XP420 KJA, were at the verge of setting them ablaze when policemen from Okota division arrived the scene and saved the situation. The policemen who immediately rescued the driver drove the vehicle away from the troubled scene.

Immediately they departed, the motorcyclists set a stationed police van ablaze. Other vehicles plying the route hurriedly made u-turns, in order to avoid their vehicles windcreens from being smashed.

At that point, residents around the area started making calls to their loved ones who were yet to return, to avoid the route. This followed rumors that several lives had been lost. An uncon-

firmed report also had it that policemen even shot dead five persons.

However, in the ensuing confusion, a police detachment for 'Area D' arrived scene and dispersed the protesters by firing tear gas into the air.

Stranded commuters who dared to pass through the spot had to raise their hands in solidarity with the police.

A motorcyclist who spoke on condition of anonymity told Crime Alert why the protesters burnt the police vehicles used as a decoy at the junction. According to him, "I believe some of our members did that because of the way the police handled the case. When they came, they only took the bus in question, the bus conductor and the bus itself, leaving our dead colleague. Perhaps if the police had made an attempt to at least to take the victim to the hospital maybe their vehicle would not have been burnt"

But another commercial motorcyclist who gave his name as Hakeem interjected, saying "The way car owners, not just bus drivers treat us *Okada* people is too bad. They carry on as if we are not human beings or as if we are not created by God.

They would not want to give us passing way, even if you beg them. They hate us for no just cause. Or are we the cause of unemployment in the country?"

However, a more objective *Okada* rider corrected the impression saying, "My brother at times the fault is from some of us. The only thing I want to point out in this incident is that it is not right for our people to take laws into their hands. It would not bring any solution. For me, this is the only means of survival until God says otherwise. I believe those who burnt the police van do not be-

long to any *Okada* association because we have been told to always do the right thing"

#### Police speak

Reacting, the Lagos State Police Public Relations Officer, Mr Samuel Jinadu, clarified that only one motorcyclist lost his life, saying that the vehicle burnt was an immovable one used as a decoy. He however said it was not enough for the protesting *Okada* riders to take laws into their hands by setting the vehicle ablaze. Driver of the commercial bus he said, was still under their custody undergoing interrogation.

### MISSING

One Daniel Elijah 'm' aged 12yrs old about 4ft tall, black in complexion speaks Yoruba languages fluently. If seen contact one Sonayon Wusu 'm' of MTN Bus Stop Lagos or Morogbo Police Station.

One Benard 'm' aged 16yrs old about 4ft tall, dark in complexion speaks Pidgin English language fluently. If seen contact one Mr. Francis Idowu 'm' of Shungo area off Isheri, Lagos or Idimu Police Station.

#### STOLEN VEHICLE

One Honda Accord SiCar with Reg. DL 565 APP Colour Black with Chassis No. IHGCM56364A012414 and Engine No. K24A42302310. If seen contact any nearest Police Station or Sango Police Station.

One Toyota Camry SiCar with Reg. No. FX 747 EKY, Colour Sky Blue with Chassis 0.4 IBG22K6V406 61 1 E, Engine No. AS1339932. If seen contact any nearest Police Station or Igbogbo Police Station.

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lice at the junction was alerted but because the deceased *Okada* rider