

Enforcement of okada ban: Police stray bullet kills commuter in Lagos

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An unidentified male passenger inside a commercial bus was, yesterday, hit by a stray bullet from policemen attached to the Lagos State Task Force, at the Second Rainbow bus stop, on the Apapa-Oshodi expressway, Lagos, killing him on the spot.

The policemen had gone to enforce the ban on commercial motorcycles on the route, when tragedy struck.

Eyewitnesses said an initial attempt by the policemen to impound some motorbikes was resisted by the riders, causing the policemen to fire some shots, apparently to disperse the commercial motorcyclists, who were over 100.

In the process, a stray bullet hit a male passenger in his 20s, right inside a commercial bus, on the other side of the road.

Other passengers, said to have sustained injuries, were rushed to the hospital.

The incident caused a stampede, as everyone took to their heels to avoid further disaster. Motorists, including commercial motorcyclists, abandoned their vehicles and fled for safety, while roadside traders abandoned their wares to the mercy of hoodlums who hijacked the opportunity to loot.

When the policemen realised the magnitude of their deed, they left the scene with some impounded motorcycles.

Rampaging protesters barricaded the highway with a bonfire, thereby depriving motorists driving outward Apapa access.

The situation further heightened the traffic situation, owing to the ongoing construction work on the axis.

The stampede left commuters with no option but to trek from Mile 2 to Second Rainbow before boarding buses to their respective destinations.

When Vanguard arrived at the scene at about 5 pm, the body of the victim, who was clad in multi-coloured shirt on black and white pants, was still lying in a pool of his own blood, with onlookers clustering around to take a shot of him.

Armed policemen were seen manning the entrance of a police post to prevent protesters from invading it.

An eyewitness, Bukola Ayeni, who spoke with our reporters, said: “Okada riders have become more daring. They have simply refused to comply with the directive of the state government on the ban. Seriously, I don’t understand these commercial motorcyclists. The government said they don’t want something, you are still doing it. Now see how the issue has led to the death of an innocent young man.”

On his part, another eyewitness, Samsudeen Mojeed, said: “Why would any sane Force storm here at this time to effect the arrest of okada riders? The only alternative means of going to Mile 2 and beyond now is okada. The whole road has been blocked, due to the construction work going on. Motorists spend at least four hours or more from Second Rainbow to Apapa, if they attempt to ply this route.

“I blame the construction company for the return of okada to this axis. The riders only hijacked the opportunity of the road construction to make some money. Government and its security agency should be sensitive when enforcing any policy.”

Confirming the incident, Director of Operations, Lagos State Traffic Management Authority, Peter Ola, said sanity had been restored, following reinforcement of the military men.

According to Peter: “There was pandemonium in Amuwo Odofin axis as okada riders clashed with security operatives at about 1500hrs today (Monday).

“Security operatives were deployed to the location to restore normalcy.”

When contacted, the Public Relations Officer of the Task Force, Mr. Raheem Gbadeyinka, said he was not aware of the incident, as he was in a marathon meeting earlier, but was unable to get back to our correspondent for confirmation as at press time.

The effort to reach the Lagos State Police Spokesman, SP Benjamin Hundeyin, on his mobile line, was abortive, as it rang without response.