

Impunity of COVID-19 Taskforce as Police Officer kills colleague in Rivers State

A female Police Officer met her untimely death on Thursday 23rd, April 2020, after she was shot dead by a colleague, Sergeant Bitrus Osaiah while on duty. Lavender Elekwachi before her death was attached to Eneka Division in Obio/Akpora Area of Rivers State and was posted to Eneka roundabout on traffic duties.

Bitrus Osaiah who also serves in the Operations Department of the Command was attached to the Rivers State Task Force on Decongestion. He shot his colleague while trying to enforce movement restriction put in place by the Rivers State government to curb the spread of COVID-19. His attitude is a blatant display of how reckless and unprofessional some uniformed men have become in a bid to enforce obedience.

The incident occurred when the policewoman, a nursing mother with an 18-month-old baby at home, tried to prevent her colleague and members of the taskforce from destroying the goods, wares and properties of some traders who have created makeshift markets in the area.

Confirming the death of the Sergeant, the Rivers State Commissioner of Police, Joseph Makunsaid the matter is under investigation and that justice will take its full course. Meanwhile, the Toyota Hilux vehicle belonging to the Task Force has been impounded, and the corpse of the slain Sergeant deposited in the mortuary.

Meanwhile, residents of Port Harcourt and other parts of Rivers State continue to complain about the manner the Rivers State Taskforce conducts their activities. A report by a Social Action team member under the COVID-19 Situation Room shows that the Taskforce members do not even observe any form of social distancing in the course of discharging their duties. They employ all forms of violence and force in order to achieve their aim and cause havoc in a disorderly manner. Incidents of Taskforce members beating up commercial drivers, engaging in street fights, impounding vehicles even without notifying the owners of the vehicle has become a norm.