

The Killer Touts of Abuja: When Revenue Collection Becomes Murder

—By Jonathan Nda-Isaiah—

This is definitely one of the saddest news I have seen or read in a long time. A tragic incident unfolded on Wednesday afternoon under the Mabushi Bridge in Abuja, where a family of three – a man, his wife, and their son lost their lives following a violent encounter with touts, popularly known as 'Agberos'. According to eyewitness accounts, the family was driving in a Toyota Highlander after purchasing a brand new refrigerator when they were chased from the Berger axis by three touts. The touts reportedly forced their way into the vehicle and began dragging the steering wheel with the driver. In the struggle for control, the car rammed into a pillar under the bridge before plunging into the drainage, killing all three occupants instantly. When I read this story, my heart broke into a million pieces. A family went out to buy a refrigerator – something as innocent as improving their home – and ended up dead because some animals masquerading as revenue collectors decided to terrorize them.

What could have been resolved amicably resulted in the death of innocent people. This madness has to stop now. The chaos that followed sparked outrage among passersby, who lynched one of the touts. While I don't support jungle justice, I completely understand the anger that drove people to that extreme. When the system fails to protect citizens from predators, people will take the law into their own hands. The police arrived to rescue the remaining two touts, typical of our security forces who are quick to protect criminals but slow to protect law-abiding citizens. After this incident, many people started sharing sad stories of these touts and revenue officers in Abuja. Nobody – and I mean nobody – has a good experience to share about them. They swoop on motorists like armed robbers, entering people's cars and removing number plates at will. Most motorists have been harassed by these revenue officers who are usually just organized criminals with government backing. They have tormented Abuja residents to hell. Once you are driving a Sienna in Abuja, you are constantly harassed by these AMAC revenue officers, and police officers often act helpless when these touts are reported to them. The police either don't care or are in cahoots with these criminals. What is it in the Nigerian DNA that once someone gets any small position or authority or you give him a uniform, he assumes the status of a small god? People in uniform see it as an opportunity to harass their fellow citizens instead of serving them. We have seen videos of Road Safety and VIO officers harassing motorists on the street. The average Nigerian is extremely harassed by uniform men daily in an already difficult environment. This reminds me of how the park-and-pay system was abused by these same revenue officers until it had to be disbanded. It also brings back memories of how the high-handedness of SARS officers triggered the EndSARS protests in 2020. The killing of these five innocent people may trigger another protest if not well managed. Abuja is supposed to be a modern city and the federal capital of the

country. Touts masquerading as revenue officers should not be on the road harassing citizens in the name of collecting revenue. This is completely unacceptable and primitive behavior that has no place in any civilized society.

The Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) and AMAC need to urgently address this menace before more innocent lives are lost. These touts operate with impunity because they know nobody will hold them accountable. They have turned revenue collection into state-sponsored terrorism. But let's also address the elephant in the room corruption. These touts are not just randomly harassing people; they're doing it because it's profitable. They collect money that never reaches government coffers, and they share the proceeds with their supervisors and the officials who deployed them. It's an organized criminal enterprise disguised as revenue collection. The solution is simple but requires political will. First, all road-based revenue

collection should be banned immediately. Revenue collection should be done through proper government offices with receipts and accountability. Anyone found collecting revenue on the streets should be arrested and prosecuted. Second, the government should digitize all revenue collection processes. In 2025, there's no excuse for having touts on the street collecting revenue manually. Technology exists to make this process seamless and transparent. Third, any official found supervising or

benefiting from street revenue collection should face immediate dismissal and prosecution. The fish rots from the head, and until we hold supervisors accountable, their subordinates will continue this criminal behavior. Fourth, the police must stop their complicity in this matter. When citizens report harassment by these touts, the police should act decisively instead of looking the other way. The protection of citizens should be their primary responsibility, not protecting criminals in uniform. The death of this family should serve as a wake-up call to the authorities to ban and outlaw these groups before more people die because of their activities. No revenue is worth the life of a single Nigerian, talk less of an entire family. I believe these touts will not be on the streets for some time for fear of being lynched by angry protesters, but that's not a permanent solution. We need systemic change that will permanently remove this menace from our streets. To the family of the deceased, no amount of words can heal the pain of this senseless loss. To the authorities, you have blood on your hands until you act decisively to end this madness. And to the touts still operating on our streets, your time is up. Nigerians have had enough of your criminality disguised as revenue collection. The federal government must act now before this tragedy repeats itself. We cannot continue to sacrifice innocent lives on the altar of

