

Two killed as Soldiers, masqueraders clash at Kogi festival

Yekini Jimoh June 1, 2026



A violent confrontation between soldiers and participants in the Echane Masquerade Festival in Ogaminana, Adavi Local Government Area of Kogi State, has left at least two people dead and several others injured, prompting the state government to suspend the annual cultural celebration across Epiraland.

The incident, which occurred on Sunday, reportedly began when two soldiers dressed in civilian clothing were allegedly attacked by some masqueraders participating in the festival procession.

Eyewitnesses said the soldiers later returned with reinforcements, leading to a tense confrontation that quickly spiralled into violence.

According to residents, the soldiers allegedly opened fire after returning to the area, triggering panic and confusion as people fled for safety. Some residents were also said to have retaliated by throwing stones at the security personnel.

The shooting reportedly claimed the lives of two innocent residents. One of the victims, identified as Omeiza, a Point-of-Sale (POS) operator, was said to have been inside his kiosk when he was struck by a stray bullet. He was later confirmed dead.

Another victim reportedly sustained gunshot injuries while sitting inside his home and died shortly after being taken to a hospital.

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A separate eyewitness account indicated that the crisis may have involved off-duty soldiers who had returned to celebrate the festival and reacted after learning that some of their colleagues had been assaulted by masqueraders in the Inorere area of Ogaminana.

Community leaders, including members of the Adavi Peace Committee and local cultural associations, were said to have intervened in an effort to calm the situation, but their mediation efforts reportedly failed.

Sources further claimed that the aggrieved soldiers called for additional support from their operational base in Okene, after which security personnel arrived and allegedly began firing shots, resulting in casualties among bystanders and injuries to several others.

Residents have since appealed to the Kogi State Government and relevant security agencies to conduct a thorough investigation into the incident, ensure justice for the victims, and prevent further violence.

Attempts to obtain an official reaction from the Kogi State Police Command were unsuccessful, as calls and text messages sent to the Police Public Relations Officer, ASP Afusat Oyiza Saliu, were not answered as of the time of filing this report.

Following the incident, the Kogi State Government announced the immediate suspension of the Echane Festival throughout Ebiraland.

The announcement was contained in a statement issued by the Commissioner for Information and Communications, Kingsley Femi Fanwo, who said intelligence reports had raised concerns that activities linked to the festival could threaten public safety and lead to a breakdown of law and order in parts of Kogi Central.

While acknowledging the cultural importance of the festival and its role in preserving Ebira heritage, the government emphasised that safeguarding lives and property remains its top priority.

Governor Ahmed Usman Ododo consequently directed the immediate suspension of all festival activities and instructed security agencies to enforce compliance across the affected communities.

The government warned that individuals or groups found organising, participating in, or promoting activities related to the suspended festival would be sanctioned in accordance with the law.

It also called on traditional rulers, community leaders, youth groups, and residents to cooperate with security agencies in maintaining peace and preventing further unrest.

The state government reaffirmed its commitment to protecting citizens and sustaining the peace and stability for which Kogi State is known.