

Rivers market shut as traders stab man to death

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Map of Rivers State

| By Dennis Naku

A popular market along the SARS Road in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State has been shut following the killing of a man identified as Ejike by a group of meat sellers allegedly from the North.

PUNCH Metro gathered that the incident occurred around 11am on Sunday, following a disagreement over N500.

Eyewitnesses in the Obio/Akpor International Market, popularly called Amaechi Market, told our correspondent on Tuesday that the attackers, numbering over 20, stabbed Ekije multiple times with daggers.

Some traders in the market, mostly women, said they were too scared to intervene, adding that a yet-to-be-identified man who tried to rescue Ejike was also stabbed in the ribs and is currently in critical condition in the hospital.

Our correspondent learnt that peeved by the development, the women began mobilising on Monday and protested at the Obio/Akpor council headquarters to register their displeasure and fears, calling on the council chairman to intervene.

The protesting women said they no longer felt safe in the market due to the violent activities of the traders, who they also accused of dealing in illicit drugs behind the market.

One of the women, who refused to be identified, said, “One man is dead, and the person who tried to rescue Ejike is in the hospital in a coma. These people should leave our market for us so that peace can reign. Now, the market has been shut down because of what happened,

“So, we want peace. Women have been crying since Sunday that this boy was stabbed. More than 20 of them confronted this boy. It was a small issue, and they started pursuing the boy. He fell down, and they started stabbing him. It was on Sunday, so not everybody came to the market. They said they were dragging N500.”

Another trader who refused to mention her name for fear of being identified said, “When we close from the market, sometimes, we don’t meet with things the same the next day.

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“They break our shops, steal our things. We don’t need them again in this market. They sell drugs behind the market and do all sorts of things. Let the government help us and push them out of this market because we are not safe.”

The chairman of the market, C.P. Oburu, who said he was informed about the incident while in church, told PUNCH Metro that he was pronounced dead at a hospital in the area.

He said, “When I got the call while I was in church, I ran to the scene of the crime and discovered that he (Ejike) was not having life in him. The doctor confirmed him dead when we rushed him to the hospital.

“From there, we went to the police. I met the Divisional Police Officer, who said we should take the body to the mortuary and gave us a patrol team. We returned. This morning, the market women staged a protest at the council.”

He confirmed that the local government authority and the police had since sealed the market and made some arrests, saying the market would remain closed until further notice.

“We met at the council, and the local government chairman promised to quickly intervene to arrest the situation and get the people involved arrested. He sent men from the police, anti-cultism unit, and civil defence. They have made some arrests. And the place is calm. For now, the market is under lock and key until further notice.”

When contacted on Tuesday, the spokesperson for the state police command, Grace Iringe-Koko, confirmed the incident but said the perpetrators are unknown.

Iringe-Koko, a Superintendent of Police, also confirmed that one person died in the incident, saying the police mobilised quickly to forestall further violence; even as she was silent on arrest.

She said: “The victim was stabbed by unidentified persons. Meanwhile, the Commissioner of Police has already deployed tactical units to cordon off the market and to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to book. Investigation is ongoing.”