

Two arrested over mourner's death at Osun funeral party

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Two people have been arrested by the Osun State Police Command in connection with the killing of a 14-year-old boy (name not disclosed), and the injuring of three others when a security guard on duty fired shots in the direction of attendees at a funeral party in Ilesa, Osun State.

The spokesperson for the state police command, Abiodun Ojelabi, who confirmed the incident during an interview with PUNCH Metro on Sunday, said those arrested in connection with the incident had been moved to the command headquarters in Osogbo, where a probe into the remote and immediate causes of the shooting was being handled.

He said, "One person was shot dead. The deceased is a 14-year-old. It happened at a funeral party in Ilesa. A guard was allegedly involved in the shooting. Three other people sustained injury. But two of those injured were discharged from the hospital this morning.

"The two people arrested are in our custody, and the investigation is ongoing into what happened at the event."

However, while speaking under condition of anonymity, sources close to the scene of the incident in separate interviews explained that the guard who fired the shot is a member of the Nigerian Forest Security Service who was on guard duty at the event.

They said the shooting was an accidental discharge, adding that the funeral ceremony came to an abrupt end, following the shooting.

One of the eyewitnesses said, “The incident was an accidental discharge because the man involved, an operative of the Nigeria Forest Security Service, was on guard duty with some of his colleagues when he released the shot.

“One person was hit, and he died immediately. Some people were also injured. The shooting led to serious panic as people ran in different directions. The event came to an abrupt end after the shooting.”

When contacted for further clarification, the Osun State Commander of the Nigeria Forest Service, Mr Hammed Nureni, said the operative involved came from Plateau State.

Nureni, who said the police had taken over the investigation into the incident, described the shooting as accidental discharge and called for calm to allow a diligent probe by the appropriate security agency.

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He further said, “They came from Jos for a burial ceremony in Ilesa. From what I was told, the shooting occurred while the guards were performing a gun salute in honour of the person who was being interred.

“The operative involved, we were told, shot into the air, and by the time he was bringing down the firearm, the gun suddenly discharged again, killing one person, said to be a relation to the deceased that was being honoured with the gun salute.”

The shooting occurred when Osun State had experienced a significant reduction in reported cases of firearms misuse, a development not unconnected with the advocacy by the security agencies on the proper use of firearms.

PUNCH Metro reported on February 28, 2024, that the Osun State Police Command warned the residents, especially hunters, against the misuse of firearms during hunting expeditions.

The command said the warning was a sequel to a series of reports of accidental discharge, which had led to the death of many people, while several others have also been injured in many such circumstances.

It subsequently admonished the hunters to avoid putting loaded guns in their homes, as children or any other person could be tempted to play with them.

The statement signed by the then spokesperson for the command, Yemisi Opalola, partly read, “The Osun State Police Command is constrained to caution/sensitise members of the public, especially hunters, on the use of guns for hunting. The command is confronted with incessant cases of accidental discharge or misfiring of guns, which on several occasions have led to the death of human beings.

“The police command is using this medium to caution hunters on the need to abide by the rules of a hunting expedition. Therefore, the command advises hunters to avoid putting loaded gun(s) in their homes, as children or any other person could be tempted to play with them or test their level of inquisitiveness.

“Also, they should desist from loading their gun(s) in inhabited areas, to reduce the hazards of accidental discharge, which is very dangerous to human lives. The command further warned that such an unwholesome act of negligence will not be treated with levity.”