

# Three shot dead during Lagos masqueraders festival

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File Copy: Lagos Police Public Relations Officer, Abimbola Adebisi.

| By Dayo Oyewo

Pandemonium broke out on Tuesday after gunmen believed to be members of rival cult groups fired gunshots during the annual masqueraders festival held in the Orile Iganmu area of Lagos State.

PUNCH Metro learnt on Sunday that at least three people were killed during the incident.

The festival is a traditional cultural event associated with a tall masquerader called Igunnuko.

It was gathered that the masquerader, which customarily appears on Tuesdays during the festival, had just emerged when youths began firing gunshots behind it.

What is known to be a common display of bravado associated with the procession, however, turned violent when a suspected cult leader and his boys allegedly aimed their guns directly at their rivals instead of shooting into the air.

A resident in the community who identified himself simply as Toyosi told our correspondent on Sunday that three individuals were shot while an unspecified number of other participants were injured.

He said, “They were supposed to be firing shots behind the masquerader as it moved, but the shooting changed when some boys and their rivals sighted each other. That was when one of the suspected cultists and his boys started aiming at their rivals. Some people were also injured in the process.”

Another resident, who did not want his name in print while citing security reasons, said the purpose of the festival was to promote peace.

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He said, "The festival is celebrated every year to allow peace and to forestall any form of calamity in the community, but what happened was otherwise. This is very unusual because the festival has always been very peaceful."

The incident was said to have caused panic in the area as some of the participants scampered to safety.

An anti-cultism advocacy group, Naija Confra, in a post on X on Thursday, said two bodies were left at the scene, while one was taken away.

The platform added that one of the perpetrators fled the community after the incident.

"When the masquerade appeared this Tuesday, both groups started showing off their shooting skills behind it until a suspected cultist and his boys intentionally fired directly at their rivals. Residents confirmed that 3 people were shot and killed on the Aye side.

"Two bodies were left at the scene, while one was taken away. Babalawo, the notorious Eiye cultist, is said to have fled to Ilorin, Kwara State," the platform noted.

The state Police Public Relations Officer, Abimbola Adebisi, could not be reached for reaction as calls made to her telephone line were not responded to. A text message sent to her had yet to be replied to as of the time this report was filed.

PUNCH Metro reported on Thursday that two male adults, identified simply as Jonathan and Konto, were stabbed to death during a suspected cult clash in the Agbarho area of Delta State.