

Onitsha prison burnt, inmates freed

**...Gov Obi
orders shoot
on sight**

ALPHONSUS NWEZE, Onitsha
and ODOGWU EMEKA
ODOGWU, Awka

PEEVED by continued threat to lives and property in Onitsha, Anambra State governor, Mr. Peter Obi yesterday directed security operatives to shoot on sight hoodlums caught perpetrating violence in the city.

Mr. Obi had on Sunday imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew on the commercial hub of the South East zone as part of measures to contain activities of suspected members of Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB).

Said he: "This problem is easy and can be solved easily. All we want is let every group

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ONITSHA CRISIS... A side view of a police post burnt during the crisis between members of the Movement for the Actualisation of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and National Association of Road Transport Owners (NARTO) at Upper Iweka, Onitsha, Anambra State. (Inset) An armoured vehicle set ablaze by a mob.
Photos: STELLA IWUAGWU

3-storey building collapses in Abuja

ALPHONSUS NWEZE, Onitsha

NO fewer than 204 inmates of Onitsha prison, were early yesterday morning, set free by persons suspected to be members of Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) who broke into the prison.

Onitsha, the commercial nerve of Anambra State has been on a dusk to dawn curfew imposed by Gov. Peter Obi following protest by MASSOB members which has also led to the deployment of soldiers to keep the peace in the city as riots broke out between MASSOB and members of National Association of Road Transport Owners (NARTO).

Daily Champion gathered that the invaders visited the prisons at 2.00 a.m, forced their way in after pulling down the gate and burning it.

It was gathered that the office block at the prison was also razed causing damage of vital prison documents and records.

An Assistant Comptroller of Prisons, who simply gave her name as Mrs. Okpoko, confirmed the incident but would not give details as she said her boss, a Deputy Comptroller of Prisons has gone to Awka to meet with the State Comptroller of Prisons from where they will move to brief Governor Obi.

This is also the second time Onitsha prison will be burnt and inmates freed within six months. Over 700 inmates were set free last February, during reprisal attacks in the commercial town, occasioned by "cartoon riots" in the North.

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COUNTRYMAN

WORLD CUP: AFRICAN
TEAMS FUMBLE - NEWS



telt it was being ignored, and it might feel slighted over the U.S.

the sufferings of the masses

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However, one of the four inmates who have returned to prison, Bright Chukwujekwu, said the hoodlums came at about 2.10 am, shooting indiscriminately into the air.

He said: when they approached the gate of the prisons, the alleged members of MASSOB said to have numbered about nine and armed with locally made pistols, pump action gun, machetes, axes and other dangerous weapons, ordered prisons officials on duty to open the gate.

But when they failed, said Chukwujekwu, they forced it open, dealt several machete cuts on the prisons official, who they believed was holding keys to the cells.

According to him, they went

Onitsha prison

to the cells, broke it open with axes and machete and marched them (prisoners) into Akpaka forest reserve, their base.

Early in the morning Monday, said the returnee inmate, they ferried the inmates on motorcycles popularly called *okada* to an unknown place inside the town.

Fresh tension, however seems to be building in Onitsha as there are fears that MASSOB members were regrouping to launch an attack on Ogbaru police station, a suburb of Onitsha.

Daily Champion learnt that Assistant Inspector-General of Police (AIG), Mr. Adewole Ajakaiye, is leading a team of

police and soldiers to secure the station.

But National Association of Road Transport Owners, (NARTO) seemed to have defied the ban placed on it and other organisations by Governor Obi in the wake of crisis that is currently engulfing Anambra State as

Daily Champion investigation showed that NARTO operatives were busy collecting tolls from commercial bus drivers at parks on Bridge head, Upper Iweka and others parks in the commercial city.

Efforts to get chairman of NARTO for comments has failed as he was said to have gone underground.

first segment of the building collapsed, came back to the scene with little or no rescue equipment and refused to speak with journalists.

Rev. Yusuf who was physically present told *Daily Champion* that "I foresaw danger in this place, but I never knew it will lead to the collapse of this building."

"Yesterday when we completed our nine day prayer and fasting, I declared public holiday today (yesterday, Monday). I never knew I was heeding to the voice of God."

"You could have imagined what a calamity it could have been if all the people who come here on a daily basis for one problem or the other were here when this building collapsed."

"You can also see that this building was constructed with

air conditioners and other literature items and recording equipment."

Rev. Yusuf, however, thanked God for saving the lives of his workers and other people who would have been in the premises when the calamity occurred.

When contacted, authorities of Abuja Metropolitan Management Agency (AMMA) said they were yet to be briefed of the development. Public Relations Officer of the Agency, Mr. Ifeanyi Ughamadu, told our reporter "Please, I will get back to you when I receive the briefs."

As at the time of filing the report, hundreds of Abuja residents were trooping to the place, to see the first building to collapse in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

provided by the mineral in the country.

On under-reporting of volume production and revenues accruable to the ministry, Dr Ezekwesili said payments from local quarries should be over one billion Naira per annum if the ministry had been transparent in the past.

She said government would soon go after cement companies that are involved in the sharp practices, noting that huge profits declared by these companies strongly indicated that proportionate payments for the limestone used in the production were not made to the ministry.

"The solid mineral sector before now was an apogee of corruption," she said.