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**Daily Champion**
**Nigeria: Onitsha - One Killed, Mopol in Coma**

Alphonsus Nweze

16 December 2009

Onitsha — At least one person died and a mobile police man beaten to coma on Monday following a clash between suspected members of the State Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and touts at Upper Iweka Road, Onitsha, Anambra State.

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Daily Champion gathered that trouble started when SARS operatives stormed place and wanted to arrest some group of boys who were allegedly smoking Indian hemp at the fly-over, Upper Iweka but were unable to arrest them.

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According to eyewitnesses, the police inability to arrest any of the fleeing hoodlums infuriated them, which made them storm the Abuja Park to look for the touts.

When the Police came to the park, the source said, they saw some boys playing draught around noon and accused them of being Indian hemp smokers.

The boys numbering about four, who were said to be members of the National Union of Road Transporters Workers, (NURTW) told the Policemen to go elsewhere if they don't have any work to do.

The statement infuriated the Police, who then wanted to arrest them, ordering them to enter their vehicle so that they would be taken to police station apparently for detention.

But the boys, according to the source resisted the arrest, insisting that they were no Indian hemp smokers, adding that over their dead body would the police arrest them for offence they claim they did not commit.

While the argument ensued between the Police and the boys, the place became charged when other members of the Union and passers by gathered at the scene to know what was in the offing.

The large gathering, said the eyewitness, probably sent the wrong signals to the police, who felt that the crowd would attack them, and it was at that juncture that one of the Policemen fired indiscriminately into the air to disperse the crowd and to instill fear in the boys.

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"It was one of the bullets from the gun shot that hit the driver, who was in his vehicle far away from scene of the incident. While another passer by was shot at the leg by another bullet." the source who pleaded anonymity narrated.

The police said the source immediately increased the shooting when they sensed that they maybe mobbed and hurriedly escaped.

While sympathizers were rushing the victims to a nearby hospital, one of the victims died on the process. This development fueled the anger of the people who began violent protest on the spot.

Unfortunately for three Mobile Police men who came to find out the cause of the shootings, the angry mob descended on them, while two managed to escape

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with their guns, one was unlucky as he was nearly clubbed to death before the mob were dissuaded to stop beating him.

According to a reliable Police Source, who does not want his name on the print, the Policeman who is attached to MOPOL 54, Onitsha was still lying critically at an undisclosed hospital in the commercial town.

When contacted, the Onitsha Police Area Commander, Mr. John Nwele, an Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) declined to comment on the matter but directed newsmen to the state Police Public Relation Officer, Mr. Emeka Chukwuemeka, an Assistant Superintendent of Police who said he was out of the State.

However, the State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Philemon Leha confirmed the incident but said he was yet to get the full details.

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