

15 feared dead in Kaduna jail break

By our Reporter

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At least 15 persons were feared killed and many injured yesterday after an attempted jail break by inmates of Kaduna Central Prison.

The jail break raised concerns over the whereabouts of Rev. Chukwuemeka Ezeagu alias Rev. King, General Overseer of Christian Praying Assembly condemned to death and awaiting the hangman at the prison.

While an official of the Prison Service said only two people died as a result of the attempted prison break, unofficial sources close to rescue agencies claimed over 15 people were shot dead during the incident.

Comptroller General of Prisons Olusola Ogundipe who visited the prison however said Rev. King was hale and healthy. He did not disclose his whereabouts, but was quick to add that though the cell of the condemned prisoners was broken, none of them took part in the rampage which also left some prison officials seriously injured.

As at the time of this report, the situation has been brought under control while bullet shells and used teargas canisters littered the entire area and vehicular movement around the place was restricted as vehicles were diverted away from the place.

Daily Champion gathered that trouble started at about 6.00 am when the inmates broke free from their cell and over powered the prison wardens on duty. In the process, they dug a hole on the wall of the cell in an attempt to escape from the prison.

It was gathered that the inmates, mainly from awaiting trial and armed robbery cells attacked the warders in an attempt to force their ways out of the prison.

A reliable source said: "Few minutes to six o'clock, we heard noise from within the yard and to our surprise, we saw the inmates in numbers moving towards the workshop and bringing out dangerous weapons which they attacked us with. They came from the G-Line of the prisons which is used in housing robbery suspects.

"The armed guards among us opened fire but were overpowered, they quickly ran outside,

while some of us were told by the inmates to change into convicts' uniform which we did. They set the admin building, record office and the workshop on fire. Some made for the walls and attempted to escape but were stopped by the guards who were firing from outside."

The source said some of the prisoners who were privy to the planned attack and escape bid had informed prison officials about the plan which led to them not being brought out for their early morning chores at the stipulated 5.00am, adding that "we didn't bring them out at 5.00am today, but by 6.00am, they broke the walls of their cells and moved into the yard".

However, there are two different versions to the actual cause of the attempted prison break and officials have refused to confirm or deny any of them, but the Kaduna state Police Commissioner blame it on Rev. King.

It was reported that many of those awaiting trial were not happy with the Prison authorities for allegedly giving Rev. King preferential treatment, while some said Rev. King had been in the forefront of fighting for the wellbeing of the prisoners at the Kaduna Prison and as a way of putting an end to such agitations which has caused some problems inside the prison, he had to be moved to another location.

Kaduna State Police Commissioner, Tambari Yabo Mohammed confirmed this angle of the report when he said attributed the whole episode to Rev. King.

He said: "From what I was told, the prison officials said one Rev. King was the cause of this problem. He has served in Kaduna prison, he has served in Lagos prison and wherever he goes he has become a problem, so they said about three days ago, they had cause to transfer him to Katsina prison, because he was causing a lot of havoc in Kaduna prison like he did in all prisons he had stayed, and three days after he left Kaduna prison trouble started".