

Two killed, many injured in Kuje prison crisis

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Two inmates of Kuje prison in the FCT were reportedly killed, three others were shot and wounded and several others sustained injury in a clash between inmates and warders in the prison yard.

While the inmates said they were merely protesting the non-availability of good drinking water in the yard when the armed squad of the Nigeria prisons descended on them, prison authorities said the inmates attempted a jail break.

One of the prison inmates who spoke to *Daily Trust* on condition of anonymity, alleged that the inmates are being subjected to various forms of torture by warders since the incident occurred on March 28, this year.

"Since that day, no inmate on awaiting trial in that prison yard has been taken to court for the continuation of the hearing of his case. Since then, we were all locked in the cells and nobody is allowed to go outside. I only saw the sun the day I was released on bail," he said.

Narrating how the crisis started, the source said there is acute shortage of drinking water in the yard and the little

supply they get is dirty with odour and colour.

"On that Wednesday, March 28 they supplied us very dirty water as our drinking water. The inmates rejected it and insisted we must report to the yard master. The warders at section one tried to use batons to force us back to our cells. We insist on seeing the yard master to complain to him.

"Almost immediately, the armed squad came into the yard shooting guns and in the process, they shot and wounded three inmates. Other warders armed with sticks, iron and other objects also descended on the inmates and wounded many. You can see these wounds on my face and hands. Warders beat me and wounded me," he said.

He said the two inmates who died as a result of the crisis were Mathew Mato a mobile police constable being charged for armed robbery and an elderly inmate identified as Joseph who was facing charges of financial crimes initiated by the EFCC.

The source said the two deceased along with five others were accused by the warders of the leading protesters. He said they were taken to a single cell in the yard from where they were being beaten and tortured until they gave up about three days after the crisis.

"Since then, inmates in the yard were being served one cup of water in the morning and a cup of water in the evening. No warder listens to the complaint of any inmate. At the slightest provocation, the waders will bring out an inmate and start torturing him," he said.

When *Daily Trust* visited the prison yard, warders denied the reporters access to the officer in charge of the prison on the excuse that he wouldn't want to speak with the press. They advised the reporters to contact the prison controller of the FCT command.

When *Daily Trust* first visited the comptroller's office, an Assistant Comptroller of prisons, Mr. M. Kogi, said there was no crisis recorded in Kuje prison throughout this year.

"The comptroller is not around. You can come back

tomorrow to see him. But I tell you there was no crisis in Kuje prison. At least not to the knowledge of the command. In any case, if there was any such crisis, the command could have known," he said.

However, when *Daily Trust* visited the controller, Mr. Abdul-Rahman Ashafa, the next day, he confirmed that there was an attempted jail break in Kuje prison and two inmates sustained injury and later died in the hospital.

Mr. Ashafa refused to give more details on the incident, saying he was too busy attending to visitors. He advised the reporters to see the service public relations officer at the prisons headquarters for more details.

At the prison national headquarters, Mr. Emmanuel Olu, an Assistant Superintendent of Prisons in the prisons public relations office said the service PRO, Mr. Kayode Ogundipe an Assistant Comptroller of prisons was not in the office and may not likely be available that day.

He said though he was aware of the incident, he was not authorised to speak to the press on the matter.