

UNIBEN

students protest colleague's killing by army vehicle

From Vincent Egunyanga, Benin

Students of the University of Benin yesterday protested over an accident involving two of their colleagues who were knocked down by a patrol vehicle belonging to the Nigerian Army.

Rita Awele and Efe, both 200 level students of the Department of Philosophy, were on their way from a church within the school when the patrol vehicle knocked them down from behind at about 10.30am on Sunday. Though the students claimed that the two did not survive the accident, the 4 Brigade Command of the Nigerian Army and the university management said one of them was responding to treatment.

While 20-year-old Rita died a few hours after the fatal accident, the students said Efe died Monday evening at the Central Hospital on Sapele Road, Benin. Yesterday's protest caused traffic build-up on the busy Lagos/Ore/Benin expressway. The students said there had been several deaths on the expressway close to the university's main gate, due to the absence of a befitting pedestrian bridge after the old one was removed.

The Director of Sports of the Students Union Government, John Ogedengbe called for proper compensation for the families of the deceased and the army officer involved should be properly dealt with. Army spokesman, Captain Jonah Unuakhalu, said the command had commenced an investigation to ascertain the "actual cause of the accident" while efforts were being made to reach families of the victims.

The Army said: "On Sunday morning there was a road traffic accident involving an Operation Pulo Shield vehicle driven by a soldier that knocked down two females who were confirmed to be students of University of Benin. They were, however evaluated to a nearby hospital where one was confirmed dead, while the other student is responding to treatment.

"Efforts are being made by the command to reach the university authorities and families of the two students and to further dialogue with the Students Union Government to avert the protest but the students insisted on speaking with government officials. It is advisable that the students should keep calm as the command is looking into the issue."