

Ethnic violence averted as scavengers protest killing of 2 members

From Eugene AGHA, Lagos

Scavengers yesterday went on rampage at Ijegun area of Lagos over an alleged killing of two of their members by suspected members of the Oodua People's Congress (OPC).

The protesters, believed to be of Hausa extraction, said they had been living along the pipeline for years and that they had suffered harassment in the hands of members of the OPC.

One of the protesters, Haruna Ahmed also alleged that suspected OPC members who kept watch over the area extorted money from them to be allowed to operate in the area.

Trouble allegedly started yesterday after some OPC members stormed the area in the early hours and allegedly demanded money from some of the scavengers, a demand that was turned down.

They were said to have left but returned, but this time the scavengers numbering over 100, resisted attempt to extort money from them.

The OPC members were said to have left again, only to come back in larger numbers, firing sporadically and gunning down two Hausa men identified as Gazali Rabi'u and Gadaffi Barawu.

A new twist developed when the scavengers allegedly contacted their colleagues who turned up from different parts of the state, destroyed a security post along the pipeline occupied by OPC, and were contemplating storming the OPC offices around Ijegun when policemen arrived the scene.

Witnesses said it took the intervention of the Area Commander 'M', Idimu, Austine Akika, an Assistant Commissioner of Police and the Divisional Police Officer in-charge of Igando and Isheri to calm the angry scavengers.

A source said owners of schools and shops close up for the day while residents who were yet to leave for their respective business places remained indoors for the several hours that it took the police to assure reasonable safety.