

3 killed, houses razed as Kogi marathon turns bloody

By Tijani Labaran, Lokoja

Tragedy struck in Kogi State on Tuesday when three people reportedly lost their lives during the annual Egume -Ome marathon race in Dekina LGA of the state.

Daily Trust gathered that the incident happened around 7.30am when a member of the state vigilante group allegedly opened fire on a protesting crowd over a decision by the organizers of the tournament to give the third position to two runners.

A source in the community disclosed that the vigilante was trying to quell the riotous crowd, by shooting into the air, but mistakenly killed two people on the spot.

He said the third victim was confirmed dead at the hospital where he was taken to for treatment shortly after the incident.

Those killed in the incident include Benjamin Adaji, Architect Rilwan, Abass Abdul and Mallam Mujaye Dansofo.

Trouble started when the spectators raised eyebrow over the decision of the organizers to declare two winners in the number third position, saying that they arrived at the finishing line at the same time.

The crowd became riotous, leading to the intervention of the

vigilante, which however led to the death of three people and the burning of two houses.

The Kogi State Police Command has confirmed the development, adding that operatives have been deployed to the area to maintain law and order.

The police spokesman, SP William Aya, disclosed that calm has returned to the area and a manhunt has been declared for the suspect who is on the run.

A resident of the area Ebrahim Yakub said, "Two persons received a tie score in the third position during the race. The organizers declared the two as winners in that position. But the decision did not go down well with some of the spectators, as they protested against one of the declared winners.

"In the process, the spectators started throwing stones at those present, a development that alerted the vigilante. One of them who was carrying a Pump Action gun, shot and killed the three persons in the ensuing confusion", Ebrahim Yakubu, a resident of Egume, said.

According to one of the organizers who spoke on condition of anonymity, the marathon race is an annual event by the youth of the town, preceding the national convention of Egume-Ome

descendants union to spice up the organisation's activities.

"We invited the police authorities to direct the marathon race, as usual. Unfortunately, their vehicle developed a mechanical fault at Efikpo, near St. Peters Catholic Church.

"While the police were fixing their vehicle, a crisis developed at the terminal point over the actual winner of the third position.

"Unfortunately, an uninvited vigilante came there with a loaded Pump Action gun and triggered it off, in his bid to restore law and order, killing the three persons in the process," a member of the organizer who craved anonymity, said.

The Kogi State Police Command's Public Relations Officer (PPRO), SP William Aya, confirmed the incident to Daily Trust, saying, three persons were killed and two houses razed in the incident.

Aya said, "the suspect, identified as Ibeni Saliu, is at large. The state police commissioner, Onuoha Benthland, has deployed some operatives of the command to the area, including men of the army to keep the law and order.

"Peace has returned to the area. And a serious manhunt is on to apprehend the suspect who is at large," he said.