

2 Killed As Police, Pro-Fubara Youths Clash In Rivers

Pro-Wike chairman, supporters chased out of secretariats Gov alleges plan to arrest supporters At least two people were killed on Tuesday as youths loyal to...



kk

By Victor Edozie, Port Harcourt

Wed, 19 Jun 2024 0:50:22 WAT



- Pro-Wike chairman, supporters chased out of secretariats
- Gov alleges plan to arrest supporters

At least two people were killed on Tuesday as youths loyal to Governor Siminalayi Fubara of Rivers State moved to enforce the eviction of local government chairmen in the state.

This comes as tension and protest spread across the 23 local government areas of the state following the expiration of the three-year tenure of the elected chairmen of LGAs and ward councillors.

Rivers State Police Command Public Relations Officer, SP Grace Iringe Koko, confirmed the killing of a policeman and a member of the Omuma Security Planning and Advisory Committee (OSPAC) in Omuma Local Government Area of the state on Tuesday.

Koko, in a message she sent on the police WhatsApp platform for journalists, confirmed that two people, whose names she did not state, were gunned down in Omuma LGA following shootings that erupted in the area.

One of the sources in the area said a policeman attached to a politician in the area had first shot at the vigilante members who were in one of the groups that clashed at the Omuma council secretariat and that the victim's men had, in reprisal, attacked the security personnel.

Aside from the incident in Omuma, there were several reports of shootings allegedly committed by security personnel at the Port Harcourt City LGA Council Secretariat. It was learned that there were shootings also at Obio/Akpor, Emohua, Eleme, and Khana LGAs by unidentified persons.

The incident followed the impasse over the elongation of the tenure of the lawmakers, which stems from ongoing political tensions between Governor Fubara and his predecessor and current FCT Minister, Nyesom Wike, under whom the outgoing chairmen were elected. The chairmen had insisted that they would remain in office for an additional six months under the Local Government Amendment Law passed by the Martin Amaewhule-led 27-member House of Assembly loyal to the FCT minister, Nyesom Wike.

The law extended the tenure of the council chairmen by six months due to the failure of Governor Fubara to conduct local government elections. But the governor, while relying on a court order restraining the Amaewhule-led lawmakers from parading themselves as members of the state House of Assembly, said the law was illegal and not binding.

The governor, however, doubled down on his earlier directive on Tuesday when he made a state-wide broadcast directing the Heads of Local Government Administration (HLGAs) to "immediately take charge of the councils with renewed vigour and readiness to serve and await further directives as we navigate towards even greater accomplishments together."

Gov Fubara alleges a plan to arrest his supporters

Following the escalation of unrest in the state, the governor summoned a State Security Council meeting with heads of security agencies, after which he told journalists that he had uncovered plots to arrest some of his supporters who had risen up to resist the outgoing local government chairmen from remaining in office after their tenure had expired.

The governor assured that he would fearlessly lead the way to ensure that peace continued to prevail in the state while also protecting all patriotic supporters for their stand on the path of truth.

He stressed that no grand plan to arrest such patriotic supporters on trumped-up charges will be tolerated.

He reiterated that there was no extension of tenure for elected local government chairmen, adding that the law is unambiguous on it and the court has also affirmed the position of the law.

“If it will cost us our lives to stand on the part of truth, we will do that. And I will be the one who will lead the course,” he added.

Governor Fubara explained that the Security Council Meeting was called because of the recent threat to the peace of the state by the outgoing chairmen of the local government councils.

“It’s really unfortunate that we started hearing some disturbing news from some LGAs of invasion of the council secretariat, and it is really unfortunate. So, we have called the Security Council meeting so that the needful will be done.

“We are also aware that our enemy is planning a lot of things. But we will not fall into that plot. We will not also allow him or them to destroy the peace that we are enjoying in the state,” he added.

Pro-Wike chairman, supporters chased out of secretariats

Earlier, the Chairman of the Association of Local Government Areas of Nigeria, Rivers State chapter, Allwell Ihunda, an ally of the FCT Minister, narrowly escaped mob action as protesting youths chased him out of the council secretariat along Moscow Road in Port Harcourt.

Ihunda, who is the outgoing Chairman of Port Harcourt City Local Government Area, was on his way to the council secretariat with some of his aides and security details when the incident occurred.

The ALGON Chairman, our reporter learnt had alighted from his vehicle and tried to make his way into the council but met a group of youths who had occupied the entrance.

On sighting him, the youths raced towards him as he ran towards his vehicle, while the security details attached to him resisted the youths from getting hold of him while shooting into the air to disperse the mob, making it possible for him to escape the onslaught.

Similarly, irate youths in Eleme Local Government Area loyal to Governor Fubara on Tuesday occupied the council secretariat.

The outgoing Chairman of Eleme local government area, Obarilomate Olor, had in a viral video on Monday threatened to deal with anybody that would come close to the council on the ground that his tenure had not expired.

But the youths, who stormed the council secretariat after the governor's state-wide broadcast directing Heads of Local Government Administration to take over the leadership of the 23 LGAs in the state, chased away all agents that were opposed to the directive issued by the governor.

The youths, in their hundreds, moved around the council premises, stating that they would not allow anyone to take away what belonged to the council.

One of the youths, who did not state his name, said, "All of them have disappeared because we have come to take over. The governor is the power that we know. We have taken over Eleme. Total takeover."