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Reign of the city terror gangs

- Miscreants run riot, shoot, clobber, maim people at will in Mushin, Lagos

By Regina Akpabio and Seye Olumide

RIVAL gangs of miscreants clashed again on Tuesday night and yesterday morning in Mushin, a densely populated part of the Lagos mainland, in what is described as supremacy contest.

The clash, in which dangerous weapons were used, started shortly after the state governor, Babatunde Raji Fashola left the zone during his local council tour.

Unconfirmed reports said several people were feared dead and many maimed. The police, which did not react early enough to curtail the violence, confirmed yesterday that they have arrested some of the marauding hoodlums, and seized many guns and other dangerous weapons.

By yesterday afternoon, many streets in the area were littered with broken bottles. Columns of loafers were still shooting sporadically into the air.

Residents who were returning from business places had to lie down for fear of stray bullets.

The traders also vacated the Ojuwoye Market for fear of being attacked by the hoodlums. As at about 6.30 p.m., traders' tables and their wares were scattered on the ground, as the owners had to hurry away from the hot spot.

It was also a no-go area for motorists, leaving the road empty and commuters stranded at the various bus stops.

At Post Office Bus Stop on Isolo Road, worn tyres were used to make bonfire and some urchins brandished


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cutlasses and machetes waiting for their opponents.

Many residents complained of losing money and handsets during the incident.

Bukky Adeyemi said: "I was returning from work and was looking for a bus to Ojuelegba when people started running in different directions. Before I knew what was going on, one of the area boys had put his hand into my trouser pocket and removed my handset and some money. I managed to escape with a motorcycle who took me to Ilasa where I took a bus to Surulere."

As at press time yesterday, calm had returned to the area, as a detachment of security agents had been drafted in. In the early hours of yesterday, an armoured personnel carrier was stationed at the median of Mushin Bus Stop on Agege-Motor Road while few street traders ventured out to carry out their businesses.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Superintendent Olabode Ojajuni said 25 people had been arrested and they would be paraded today while seven revolvers and other dangerous weapons were recovered from the hoodlums.

The Force also assured that sanity had been restored to the area and that law-abiding citizens were free to go about their businesses.

Several accounts of what caused the clash were available yesterday depending on who one spoke to.

But it was clear that the fight was over who should control the lucrative motor park business in Mushin. Anger over political recognition was also cited as another underlying causative factor.

Two prominent kingpins in the motor park business were said to have instigated their followers to go after the others shortly after the governor left the area.

The Guardian reporter who was caught up in fray on Tuesday evening had a first person account of the events as shown in the box on this page.

Even before Fashola left the Local Council Secretariat

where he addressed the workers, the rival gangs were already in a mood for a fight.

Fashola had told the people to take good care of government property in their domain, especially roads. He was unhappy that a road in Ikeja built by the same contractor as another in Mushin, was still in good shape whereas the one in Mushin had worn out rapidly.

The residents appealed to the governor to take the security of Mushin more seriously as gang at war was always throwing the area into turmoil.

Mushin has always been a hotbed of gang clashes in the state dating from the First Republic. During that time, the clashes were politically induced. Nowadays, it is war of the gangs over control of areas of influence and the purse of the local motor parks and market royalty. In almost all cases, innocent people are killed, maimed, raped and property burnt.

This month alone, there have been up to three clashes of the gangs and several cases of robbers going berserk.

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