

13 feared dead in Ibadan attempted jail-break

From Iyabo Lawal, Ibadan

PANDEMONIUM broke out yesterday at Gate area of Ibadan, Oyo State capital, when some inmates of the Agodi prisons attempted to break out of their cells.

In the ensuing melee, 13 awaiting trial inmates were feared killed by prison officials and mobile policemen deployed to the scene.

Also, 20 others, including eight members of staff, sustained serious injuries and were taken to the University College Hospital (UCH).

However, the State Comptroller-General of Prisons, Mrs. Maureen Omeili and Commissioner of Police, Udom Ekpoudom, put the number of dead inmates involved in the attempted jail-break at eight.

A source at the UCH confirmed that 11 dead bodies had been deposited at the mortuary while 22 injured inmates with bullet wounds were receiving treatment.

Trouble started around 6 a.m. when some of the awaiting trial inmates revolted against the prison authorities and made to escape from their cells.

There were, however, conflicting reports as to the actual cause of the protest. While an account said the inmates were protesting over poor feeding and welfare, prison officials said the suspects were kicking against the alleged death of one of their colleagues.

The awaiting trial inmates reportedly descended on a warder who was on early morning inspection of the cells, stabbed him with a knife and made for one of the cells where they forced the door opened for some of their colleagues to join the protest.

Three other prison officials who attempted to stop the inmates were also stabbed by the men who went on rampage.

Armed with dangerous weapons including knives, scissors and shovels, the inmates went wild, forcing prison staff to scamper for safety.

They headed for the newly installed close circuit camera and destroyed it. Some went into the store and workshops where they brought out more weapons with which they armed themselves. Others made for the clinic where drugs and medical equipment were destroyed.

When reporters were conducted round the prison by the Deputy Controller in Charge, Olanrele Joseph, the premises was in disarray. Splatter of blood dotted the floor. Broken window panes and shattered medical equipment, spent tear-gas canisters, knives, spades, bags of beans, plates, padlocks and drugs littered the premises.

At the far end of the prison, there was a drilled hole in the fence with blood-stained blanket.

Armed mobile policemen stood at the other side of the fence to ensure that no inmates escaped through the drilled hole.