

One feared killed as council workers protest unpaid salaries

AT least one person has been reportedly killed and several others hospitalised following the protests that erupted in Ibi Local Council Area of Taraba State over the non-payment of workers' salaries.

The local council employees were said to have also accused the council chairman, Yakubu Agbaizo, of staying away from the council in Jalingo, the state capital or Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory.

Apart from the death and injuries, property worth millions of naira, including a church, was said to have been razed by the protesting workers.

The anger of the workers, *The Guardian* learnt, was ignited when the chairman, instead of paying the entire salaries owed, decided to pay only half of the salaries for the month of August.

*From Charles Akpeji,
Jalingo*

On sensing danger, the chairman was said to have taken to his heels but was cornered by the workers, prompting sporadic shootings by policemen attached to the council headquarters.

The chairman, who at the time of filing this report was taking refuge at the nearby local council of Wukari Police Station, was said to have had a narrow escape.

Protests and complaints have recently emanated from many local councils in the state about the refusal of the council chairmen to pay workers' salaries for over three months.

Some of the chairmen, who preferred anonymity, told *The Guardian* that the amount given to the councils after "different deductions is nothing to talk about".

According to one of them, "the state government has warned us about collecting loans yet, the amount they give to us monthly is an eye sore. There is no single local council here that will say it is not owing its employees for at least two months".

"Apart from the workers' salaries, our contractors are also on our necks. How did you expect us to cope when our monthly take home after their deduction is not something to talk about?"

The protesting workers have reportedly vowed to stop the council boss from entering the town pending when their requests are met.

Security operatives, as gathered, have been drawn from the neighbouring local councils to the area, which shares a boundary with the neighbouring Plateau State.