

TheMetroSection

Youth's stomach ripped open, 15 hospitalised, mob sacks police station as factions clash

Bloody Monday in Kogi's Yagba West

From Ralph Omololu Agbana, Lokoja

ABIDING citizens of Kogi State, particularly those in Yagba West Local Council of the state must be praying that what happened last Monday, would not be a bitter foretaste of what lies ahead.

A faction of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the area was allegedly ambushed by another, at the end of which a 24-year-old secondary school leaver's bowel was ripped open with a broken bottle and his intestines spilled out onto the ground.

Two others were reportedly tied to a motorcycle and dragged several metres on the ground in the pool of their blood until they lost consciousness. About 10 vehicles were vandalized, 15 youths were hospitalized, two of them in critical condition.

The orgy of violence in Yagba West Council was triggered by an on-going bitter contest between two factions for the control of party machinery ahead of the ward congresses.

The factions clashed in Odo-Eri town, along Kabba-Ilorin Road when a motorcade conveying supporters of a rival faction was ambushed and the occupants attacked.

The clash was the climax of the protracted tussle between a faction loyal to a member of the House of Representatives, the leadership of which also include a council chairman who is a special adviser to the state governor and councilors alleged to have been promised a second term.

The other faction includes those regarded as 'old school' politicians supported by professionals and elite groups from within and in the Diaspora.

A former PDP Local Council Party Chairman, Mr. Victor Rotimi Dada told *The Guardian* the other faction "has cornered all political appointments accruing to Yagba West in the last four years."

"They have been in control of the party structure, because they had influence in Government House in Lokoja."

That was until now that the governor has asked anybody looking for delegates to go to his wards and be voted for.

"In the past, they just sat in Abuja and wrote the list of delegates."

"But when they discovered that it is not going to be possible this time around, they resorted to all forms of tactics. But we will resist them, although non-violently."

Eyewitnesses said trouble started when one of the factions decided to hold a rally following one held by the other two days earlier.

The rally, the witness said, had been peaceful as the supporters sang, danced and displayed the posters of Senator Smart Adeyemi and Mr. Folorunsho Danjani.

"The motorcade of about 35 vehicles had covered the 10-kilometre trip from Egbe to Ejiba and was returning to Egbe when they were attacked by hoodlums who had laid ambush in Odo-Eri."

"They smashed car windshields and attacked the occupants using machetes, and other dangerous weapons."

Some who managed to escape reported to the Divisional Police Headquarters, Odo-Ere, about three kilometres from the scene of the incident.

The Duty Officer was said to have reacted promptly by deploying men to Odo-Eri where on arrival they dispersed the crowd without making any arrests.

"Because the DCO did not arrest the culprits, many of whom were easily identifiable, the crowd became angry, accusing the DCO of connivance with their tormentors."

"As tempers rose, the Divisional Police Officer in Egbe who later mobilized his men to assist the DCO, in attempt to scare the crowd away, pulled out his gun, threatening to shoot."

"But rather than get scared, the protesters became further infuriated."

They surged forward and overpowered the officers who gave way to avoid likely bloodshed. The mob took control of the police station, forced open detention cells and freed detainees", the witness told *The Guardian*.

It took the intervention of community leaders to restore normalcy to the area at about 8.00p.m., but not until the restive crowd was assured that the police, within 24 hours would arrest the identified culprits.

One of the victims who also spoke with *The Guardian* said: "We were completely taken unawares and we were unprepared because our leaders had told us to go about the rally peacefully. It would have been bloodier if we knew what they were planning and made our own plans."

He gave the names of victims in hospital as Sunday Adedayo, Bodunrin Adeshina and Tope Ajayi, whose stomach was ripped open.

Tope, a secondary school leaver, was said to have been stabbed severally in the stomach at a beer palour in Egbe in the presence of two serving councilors.

But the Yagba West Council Chairman, Ropo Asala, who was accused of complicity in the incident denied the report, saying: "I'm a local council chairman, and our preparation was for the congress to hold."

"The only thing that I heard was that some people came to Odo-Eri and they were said to be abusing people. There was no casualty. That was what I was told."

However, alerted by the ultimatum issued by the group that claimed its whose members were victimized, insisting that the police must arrest the culprits, failure of which they threatened to retaliate, Police Commissioner in charge of Kogi State Command, Abdullahi Mogaji, on Wednesday read the riot act to politicians.



One of the victims, Ladi Asehide



Another victim



One of the damaged vehicles

He said troublemakers must steer clear of the 2011 elections.

Confirming the incident in Yagba West to *The Guardian*, Mogaji who disclosed that he had called an emergency meeting with chairmen of all the political parties in the state in his office in Lokoja, vowed to arrest, detain and prosecute perpetrators of the violence, no matter how highly placed.

"The thugs who were recruited to carry out this violence will be treated as armed robbers," he added.

He continued: "I am meeting with chairmen of all the political parties so that such incidents like what happened in Yagba West will not be repeated."

"I am warning trouble makers from the state capital down to the grassroots not to try any nonsense."

"The coming elections, including the party congresses, are under the close watch of the police and any form of violence will not be tolerated."

"I have directed the Area Commander to investigate the matter and whoever is found wanting in his conduct will be arrested, detained and prosecuted no matter how highly placed."

"If you are popular, go and prove your popularity in the open field."

"If some politicians think the only way they can achieve their ambition is to cause violence, we are battle-ready for them."

"Thank God that the congresses have been postponed. It will give us enough time to prepare."

A member of the Kogi State Assembly representing Yagba West Constituency, Philip Orebiyi condemned the ambush and disclosed that some of the perpetrators of the violence at Odo-Eri have been arrested by the police and would be prosecuted.

He allayed fears of fresh violence in the area and assured that there would be enough security whenever the congresses hold.

Briefs

Outreach holds convention October 1

ABRAMHAM Outreach for the Needy will mark its third yearly convention/ thanksgiving service on Friday, October 1, at Choppies Restaurant, No. 91, Ojuelegba Road, third floor, Surulere, Lagos at 10.30a.m.

Guest speaker is Rev. A. K. P. Oladipupo while Moderator is Mrs. Mandu Tom-James.

Organisers include Elder Abraham and Sarah Ekanem and Evang. Zebulun and Hannah Nweke among others.

Church marks anniversary

THE Calvary Image International Ministries will from Thursday, October 7, to Sunday, October 10, mark its second anniversary at No. 10, Aregbesolo Street, First Bus Stop, Idimango, Kudeibu Estate, Ijebu, Ikorodu, Lagos at 5.30 p.m. daily while Sunday's thanksgiving service begins at 10.00a.m.

Host is Rev. Evans Ngele while guest minister is Koyejo Kayode.

Oke-Are Seminary old boys hold AGM

OKE-ARE SEMINARY Old Boys' Association of Nigeria (OSOBAN) will hold its Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Saturday, October 9, at its alma mater, St. Theresa's Catholic Seminary, Oke-Are, Ibadan, Oyo State. The event will be attended by His Eminence, Anthony Cardinal Olubunmi Okogie, Archbishop Felix Alaba Job of Ibadan Diocese, Dr. Adewale Martins, the Catholic Bishop of Abeokuta Diocese as well as other priests and laity across the country.

The AGM will be preceded on Friday, October 8 by "Reminiscences", where old boys relieve their experiences while in the school.