

# Three UNIPORT students feared killed as police quell protest

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Three students of the University of Port Harcourt protesting against increase in school levies were being feared dead yesterday as the police tried to forcibly disperse them.

And to avert further loss of life and destruction of property, the authorities of the university announced closure of the institution for one month and suspension of students' union and their affiliate bodies.

Students of the university had since Sunday been barricading the East- West Road in protest over what they described as astronomical increase in their fees from N15, 000 to N45,000. The students' anger was kindled when the authorities announced that none of them would be allowed to sit for the examination which was due to commence this week, until they pay the

contentious fees.

Some of the students told The Guardian that while they were on the East-West Road protesting, scores of anti-riot policemen arrived and started shooting tear gas and live bullets into the air to disperse them. Amid the pandemonium that ensued, the policemen swooped on the protesting students and arrested some of them.

It was alleged that the policemen had within Sunday and yesterday shot three students dead. One of the victims, who was identified as the president of the Faculty of Management Sciences Student Union, Peter Oपुरum, was said to have been shot yesterday and later confirmed dead.

One of the students, in emotion laden voice, said: “We were there protesting peacefully and the police came and started arresting our students.

They took the advantage of this to start shooting tear gas. They were shooting bullets and tear gas directly at us. They got to Oपुरum and shot teargas at him. The police shot him thrice on his chest,” he said.

The spokesperson of the university, Williams Wodi, told The Guardian that none of the students was killed within the campus, but outside while protesting.

“On Sunday, a student was shot dead by a mobile policeman and then another student was shot dead in mysterious circumstances. Today, we are hearing stories, we have not confirmed that another student was shot dead on the East-West Road, none of these incidents took place on our campus,” he said

Wodi explained that the riotous students had before proceeding to the East-West Road gone on rampage within the university, vandalizing cars, smashes buildings and molesting people and shutting down the various security posts within the institution.

He stated that neither the management nor the Senate of the university had increased any fee as alleged by the students. He pointed out that as a federal university, the institution is forbidden to charge fees, but allowed to charge non- statutory levies amounting to the contentious N45,000.

Wodi said: “There is no increase in fees. We don’t even charge fees, what we have here are charges and those charges amount to just N45,000 as approved by the Federal Government per year, and this is charged across board. There is no increment in fees, there is no increment in charges.”

The Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Ahmad Muhammad, denied the killing of the students. He explained that what the police did was just the discharge of their mandate of protecting life and property.