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One dead, others injured in Egungun festival violence

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• Olubadan vows to expose perpetrators of mayhem

The Oyo State Police Command yesterday confirmed the death of one person in the violence that trailed the public outing of the Ege masquerade in Ibadan on Sunday. The police spokesman in the state, ASP Adekunle Ajisebutu, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on Monday that two suspects were also arrested in connection with the incident. Violence had marred the Egungun festival on Sunday as many residents were assaulted while properties were destroyed.

The festival, which often featured displays by masquerades, is meant to showcase the rich culture and tradition of Ibadanland. Ajisebutu, however, said the command had beefed up security in the area where the Egungun festival was taking place.

Meanwhile, the Olubadan of Ibadanland, Oba Saliu Adetunji, has expressed displeasure with Sunday's violence. He said several meetings were held with stakeholders on the need to keep the peace before the festival commenced.

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Adetunji, who commiserated with victims of the violence and their families, pledged that the perpetrators would be brought to justice. An unconfirmed source said about eight persons were killed, while several others sustained varying degrees of injuries when street urchins hijacked the celebration of Ibadan customs and tradition and turned it into mayhem.

Commenting on why he refused Ege masquerade from entering into the palace, Oba Adetunji stated that the palace officials were not informed that he was coming at the said date and time. He also said the masquerade does not belong to the category of masquerades that visit the palace of Olubadan and high chiefs' homes.

He, however, said while the palace of Olubadan is open to all and sundry, including egungun, the rule is that the Olubadan and his chiefs must be informed in advance for adequate preparations to be put in place to receive them.

Meanwhile, Oloolu masquerade that is slated to visit the Olubadan today had been advised to keep away for fear of reprisal attack. It would be recalled that Ege masquerade that is expected to come out once in three years is known for his large, uncontrollable crowd and attendant violence.

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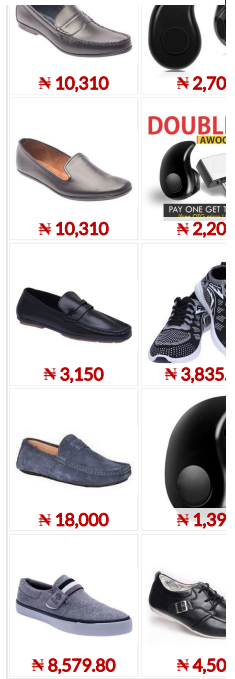
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