

The MetroSection

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Protests in Edo as truck crushes driver at police checkpoint over N100 settlement

From Alemma-Ozoruvu Aliu and Michael Egbejule (Benin City)

MANY parts of Benin City were locked down yesterday with four police patrol vehicles and a truck belonging to the state government burnt by an angry mob after a commercial cab driver, simply identified as John, was crushed to death by a truck while having an altercation with policemen at a checkpoint.

The incident happened at Third Junction in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State in the early hours of yesterday. Eyewitnesses' accounts revealed that the policemen stopped the victim who was with his fiancée in the car, and demanded N200 from him for possession of expired vehicle particulars, but the deceased offered N100, which enraged the policemen, leading to an argument. In the process, he was dragged out of the car.

The driver fell off the car. In that instant, an oncoming tanker ran over him and crushed his head, spilling his brain and other particles on the road. The incident happened in the presence of his wife. The Guardian gathered that the

couple was planning for their marriage next Saturday.

The vehicle of the deceased is a black BMW with registration number Edo: AFZ 846 HW and the petrol tanker is marked Lagos: FKJ 567 XB. Both vehicles were parked at the scene of the incident.

Angry youths immediately attacked the policemen when they attempted to take the body away. Some policemen at the checkpoint where the incident happened managed to escape the melee but a policeman was lynched, according to a witness.

The mobile court sitting at the Third Junction was disrupted by the rioters and everybody arrested for various offenses were set free before a vehicle kept there was burnt. Three other persons, including a policeman, were reported to have been killed in the fracas that ensued.

The protest later spread to Akpakpava road, Murtala Mohammed road and Second East circular, as angry youths set ablaze four operational vehicles (Hilux van) belonging to the police and another tax force van belonging to the state govern-



ment was not spared. Bonfires were set by the angry youths in protest of the killing thereby obstructing the free flow of traffic. The protest later turned violent and resulted in a clash between youths and some mobile policemen deployed to the scene who were almost over-

whelmed.

As the policemen fired tear gas canisters to disperse the protesters, the demonstrators threw stones at the security personnel. It took the deployment of the military to remove the body of the driver as large crowd that had gathered rained curses

on the police. The late driver was said to have concluded arrangement for his wedding scheduled to hold this weekend.

The Edo State Commissioner of Police, Johnson Kokumo, when contacted yesterday confirmed the developments.

stated that "the police are currently investigating the matter. As it is now, it is still an allegation against the police and not until investigation is done before we cannot say if the police is culpable or not.

Meanwhile, Edo State governor, Godwin Obaseki, has called for calm over the clash between some youths and mobile policemen. In a statement by the Special Adviser to the Governor on Media and Communications Strategy, Mr. Crusoe Osagie, Obaseki urged aggrieved parties to "allow for justice to run its due course, as efforts are underway to ensure that those liable for the crime are brought to book."

The governor condemned the fact that the incident degenerated into civil disturbance, noting that there were better ways to resolve the

scuffle. According to him, "the relevant security agencies are on the alert to quell further breakdown of law and order in the area. We also appeal to the people to be calm and cooperate with security agencies to bring in those responsible for the unrest."