
Stray bullet kills cleaner in SARS, robbers clash

By Odita Sunday and
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scene of the incident



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A stray bullet yesterday morning killed a cleaner identified as Francis during a gun duel between suspected armed robbers and operatives of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) in Ilupeju, Odiolowo Ojuwoye local council development area of Lagos State.

Eyewitnesses had accused the SARS operatives of being responsible for the death of Francis at about 7:30 a.m. in Ladipo, near Ajisegiri Street, Ilupeju. The deceased was said to be going about his routine business when the bullet hit and killed him on the spot.

Also affected were passersby, residents, and students of Christ Central School, Ajenifuja following the police raid on the notorious den. For nearly an hour, pupils affected by the teargas released by the police were kept in isolation for kerosene cleansing of the affected eyes.

Journalists and human rights activists who were mobilized to the scene were not spared the teargas while a detachment of policemen was deployed to disperse the aggrieved crowd gathering to ensure justice was done. They were all chased away from the scene.

It was gathered that the police had taken an alleged notorious suspect, Ikechukwu Monye, 39, to the neighbourhood for identification of his gang's armoury but they were attacked by alleged members of his syndicate in a bid to scuttle the operation.

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According to a witness at the scene, “the guy was in the area to sweep the compounds of his customers. The Ajisegiri area is notorious because of these boys who come here to smoke, and police have always raided the area. But this morning, none of the boys were there, just this man going about his business. He was shot and he died on the spot.”

It would be recalled that Ilupeju has experienced violent cult clashes, especially between rival groups, Eiye and Aiye lately that have left no fewer than six persons dead. There have also been allegations of armed robbery, rape, and extortion by hoodlums operating in the area, which had extended its activities to Onipanu and Mushin.

Reacting to the incident, the police said the hoodlums released gunshots upon sighting the SARS team and killed the cleaner in the process. A statement by the police spokesman, DSP Bala Elkana, said the assailants shot sporadically and in the process killed a middle-aged man who was passing by.

“Reinforcement was quickly drafted to the scene. The whole area was cordoned off with a view to apprehending the members of the gang and bring them to justice. The gang in question is responsible for the series of robberies within Ilupeju and environs. They have been on the wanted list of the police for the murder of six persons during three robbery operations that were recently carried out.

“Members of the public are enjoined to remain calm as the command has intensified patrols and surveillance in the affected areas. The body of the victim has been removed and deposited at the mortuary for post-mortem examination. The command extends its heartfelt condolences to the family of the deceased person and assured them that justice will prevail,” he said.

In March, there was a nationwide outrage following the killing of Kolade Johnson, a football fan, in Onipetesi area of Lagos. Johnson had left his house on a Sunday evening to join friends at Kingstine-Jo, a nearby bar, to watch the live English premiership match between Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur. His killers were later identified as Ogunyemi Olalekan, an inspector, and Godwin Orji, a sergeant who has now been dismissed from the force.



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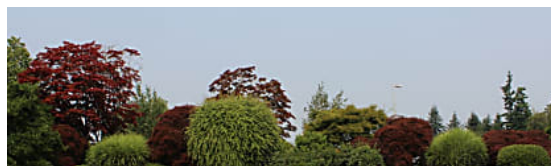
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