

Lagos, Edo, Kano, FCT, Plateau, Oyo, Ekiti as flashpoints

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our dear state.

"I, therefore, hereby impose a 24-hour curfew on all parts of the State as from 4pm to 10pm, 20th October, 2020. No body, except essential service providers and first responders, must be found on the streets."

Ekiti State Governor, Dr Kayode Fayemi, also imposed a 24-hour curfew on all parts of the state starting from 10.00 pm, Tuesday, October 20, 2020.

Fayemi said only essential workers and service providers with valid means of identification would be allowed to move around during the period of the curfew.

Plateau State Government yesterday evening announced similar measures in Jos North and Jos South local government councils with effect from 8pm yesterday.

Deputy Director of Press and Public Affairs, Mr. Solomon Gujor, told The Guardian yesterday that the action became necessary because criminal elements had hijacked the genuine intention of ENDSARS protests in the state and the country at large.

Aba State's Information Commissioner, John Okiyi Kalu, late Tuesday evening also issued a statement announcing Governor Okezie Ikpeazu's imposition of 24-hour curfew on Aba, the commercial centre, and Umuahia, the state capital, from 6pm.

But the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Ilesha branch, Osun State, yesterday warned against imposition of curfew to quell #ENDSARS protest across the country.

The lawyers fumed at the imposition of curfew by some state governments, saying that it might implode the nation.

The lawyers, armed with a big banner with inscriptions, "#ENDSARS, We say no to Police brutality," "We say no to bad governance," "We say no to corruption," visited Police area Command office in Ilesha to express their displeasure against police brutality.

Olátúnjì Sokoya, the immediate past secretary of the NBA, Ilesha Branch, condemned imposition of curfew and maintained that it had the tendency to collapse the nation, if not well managed.

He said that, at a time the masses were agitating for an end to bad governance, it would be counterproductive for governments to impose curfew.

Sokoya said it was high time Nigerian youths took over the instruments of governance in the country since

the present leaders had failed the masses. He warned against imposition of curfew, saying that the nation would be sitting on gunpowder.

THE ENDSARS protests, which started early October, have continued to paralyse activities in major cities of the country, as young Nigerians seek reform of the Police and the country's governance architecture.

Lagos, Kano, FCT, Plateau, Oyo and Ekiti became major flashpoints as of yesterday. The Guardian gathered last night that, after days of pressure, President Muhammad Buhari might agree to address the country in a major broadcast. Sources said he already had a crucial meeting with the diplomatic community to explain the situation to them. The President last night also met with the Minister of Defence, Major General Bashir Magashi, an indication that he could be weighing his options, including the use of force to quell the protests. There was, however, no official communication on the agenda of the meeting.

A Video depicting soldiers shooting amid stampeding protesters in an area believed to be Lekki Toll Gate in Lagos where protesters had sat in for days, trended in the social media last night. This has fueled concerns that the Operation Crocodile Smile of the Nigerian Army, which took off yesterday, is in full force.

The Senate yesterday asked the President to immediately address Nigerians on the raging protests, just as it called on protesting youths to embrace dialogue with the Federal Government in resolving the issues.

Senator Adamu Aliero, who was formerly governor of Kebbi State, however, urged Buhari to use force if dialogue failed. Sources said that Senate's intervention in calling on President Buhari to address the nation might have prevented a more serious action of declaring emergency rule across country.

A lawmaker, who would not want his name in print, said the President might be forced to use his constitutional powers to impose a state of emergency as guaranteed in section 305 of the Constitution.

Adopting the motion, the Senate approved that all tiers of government should put in place machineries to address socio-economic issues affecting youths across the country. It equally called on the Inspector General of Police, Mohammed Adamu, to embark on a comprehensive reform of the police.

The Senate asked the protesting youths to approach the Constitution Review Com-

mittees of the National Assembly and present issues they would want amended.

The Senate advised the President to immediately set up a Judicial Panel of enquiry to probe cases of abuse of human rights by policemen in the past.

Senate Minority Leader, Enyinnaya Abaribe, who suggested the prayer, informed the Senate that some five notorious Special Squad Anti-Robbery (SARS) operatives who had killed people illegally were yet to be made to face the law, adding that there was need to do so immediately.

Most Senators including the Deputy President of the Senate, Ovie Omo-Agege, testified that they had witnessed cases of police brutality in the past.

In the House of Representatives, lawmakers enjoined President Buhari to issue an Executive Order to address police brutality across the country.

Adopting a motion of urgent public importance sponsored by Sada Soli (APC, Katsina) at the plenary presided by Speaker Femi Gbajabiamila, the House enjoined protesters calling for the disbandment of SARS to have faith in the National Assembly and the Executive in addressing their grievances.

The House also resolved to constitute an Ad-hoc Committee to be chaired by the Deputy Speaker, the membership of which should comprise the Majority Leader, the Minority Leader and three members each from the Committees on Defence, Police, Army, Airforce, Navy, Interior, National Security and Intelligence and Human Rights to interface with relevant security agencies, other relevant agencies and interest groups to ensure a peaceful end to the protests.

THE agitations had started as peaceful demonstration, a civil disobedience to force government to address a regime of police brutality, extortion and corruption, but turned violent in the last two days, forcing the governors of Edo and Lagos states to declare 24-hour curfew.

In a move to support declaration of curfew in Edo, Ekiti and Lagos states, IGP Adamu, yesterday, ordered nationwide deployment of anti-riot police unit, the Police Mobile Force (PMF), to protect lives and property and secure critical national infrastructure. Adamu also ordered massive deployment of Police operatives to strengthen security around correctional facilities nationwide.

Force Public Relations Officer, DCP Frank Mba, said the orders were coming on the heels of increasing attacks, including acts of arson and

malicious damage to public and private facilities, as recorded in some states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

"Consequently, the Commissioners of Police in the thirty-six (36) states and the FCT are to identify and isolate law-breakers from peaceful protesters; immediately arrest and diligently prosecute such perpetrators of violence in their respective Commands."

"The IGP notes that twelve (12) suspects have been arrested in connection with the attacks and arson on Police Stations in Benin, Edo State. Five (5) AK47 rifles earlier stolen from vandalised police stations have also been recovered."

FORMER Deputy National Chairman of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Chief Olabode George, however, said the decision to lock down Lagos with a 24-hour curfew was hasty and wrong.

In statement yesterday, George said it was time "to reflect, time for the peace of the roundtable."

According to him, "The issue on the ground is far beyond the narrow province of partisan concern. It is about the collective unity of our nation. It is about healing the festering sores planted by greed and the indifference of misplaced leadership."

"I will advise President Muhammadu Buhari to galvanise all the necessary tools of statesmanship and elderly guidance to steer the angry youths towards a peaceful resolution of their legitimate grievances."

In the same vein, Lagos State chapter of the PDP faulted the decision.

Its Publicity Secretary, Mr. Taofik Gani, said the decision was confrontational, ill advised and capable of inflaming the already compressed 'beast' in the peaceful demonstrators against police brutality and other government-induced vices in the state.

According to PDP, "The governor must consequently take responsibility for any degeneration into maiming, killing and oppressive arrests. The governor has again shown that he acts copy and paste in governance, otherwise, the peculiarities of ancillary issues of agitations in the state are such that the governor only needs to act immediately rather than declaring curfew apparently because one or two governors did same."

But the National Secretary of the Retired Members Of Nigeria Armed Forces (RE-MENAF), Dr Oamien Roy Okhidievbie, said the curfew declared by Governor, Sanwo-Olu was a step in the right direction. He argued that failure of the protesters

to go for roundtable with the Federal Government and shifting goal post of demands caused the infiltration by hoodlums.

He maintained that protest was a constitutional right but pointed out that those in power would often resist demand for change of government through protests.

"I believe that the curfew is in the right direction. A protest is an appropriate conduct with the constitution of any country in the world, except may be Iran and China. But when protesting, the protesters should have set rules and demands and they should maintain that trajectory to achieve the set rules and demands."

But there are serious concerns, as residents wonder how Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu's curfew would not aggravate the situation and put the economy on edge, especially as Edo State recorded poor compliance yesterday. Government's inability to effectively enforce the curfew could further embolden protesters and lead to further breakdown of law and order.

TWO people were killed in the Ojo area of Ibadan as police opened fire on hoodlums who allegedly attacked a police station during the protests. At least, four persons were killed and many others injured, following a clash between #EndSARS protesters and hoodlums in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja yesterday.

Trouble started at about 10am when some hoodlums tried to attack protesters who barricaded all roads on Dutse/Bwari in Bwari Area Council of Abuja.

Residents said the protesters responded and attacked back, killing one of the hoodlums in the process.

It was, however, gathered that the hoodlums went back to regroup and came back in large numbers to attack residents, also killing at least three people in the process.

An eyewitness, who simply identified himself as Isaac, told The Guardian that hoodlums were transported to the venue of the protest in a trailer.

According to him, "Early this morning, the protesters barricaded the Dutse Sokale roundabout and were going about their demonstration peacefully. But not too long, some people came to disrupt the protest. The next thing I saw was a lifeless body. I was told one of the attackers was killed."

"As you can see, one of the persons killed is not even part of the protest; he is just

returning from work but was caught up in the attack," he said.

Another eyewitness said men of the Nigeria Police Force came to disperse the hoodlums using teargas but they gathered back as soon as the security personnel left the scene.

As at the time of filing this report, youths in the area had mobilised themselves to prevent further attack on the community.

Protesters, seeking an end to SARS, had blocked entry and exit points of the Federal Capital Territory through the Airport Road yesterday.

The Airport Road, also known as the Umaru Musa Yar'Adua Expressway, connects the city to the airport and other parts of FCT, including Kuje District, Gwagwala and other states. At about 10am, the road had already been blocked completely near the Abuja Centenary city.

Though there was heavy military presence on the link road to the airport, protesters were seen displaying #ENDSARS placards. The Guardian learnt that travellers, using the airport were forced to leave their homes early, irrespective of their flight schedule, to avoid missing their flights. Some travellers had also booked hotels close to the airport. A traveller, Simeon Mercy, who said she was flying to Sokoto, was at the airport at about 9am for a 3pm flight schedule.

An Immigration Officer told The Guardian that she was forced to remove her uniform before finding her way through the protesters. IN Edo, Hoodlums yesterday broke into the Nigeria Customs Service warehouse in Benin under the guise of #EndSARS protest.

It was gathered that the hoodlums broke into the warehouse located in Ikpoba in the evening and carted away several items ranging from foodstuffs to other valuables.

It was also revealed that, immediately residents of the area heard of the warehouse attack, they rushed to the place to have their share.

The hoodlums and residents of the area were seen carting away bags of rice and other valuables unhindered from the warehouse.

The warehouse attack is coming barely 24 hours after the jailbreak at the Ojo Correctional Centre in Airport Road and the Minimum Correctional Centre in Sapele to free inmates.

The Edo State Government had, on Monday, declared 24-hour curfew but the hoodlums defied the directive and continued with the protest in some part of Benin City.