

Traditionalists, Muslims' clash claims life as gunmen abduct resident in Osun

From Timothy Agbor, Osogbo

PANDEMONIUM broke out on Sunday when some masquerades and their followers clashed with some Muslim worshippers at a mosque in Osogbo. One person was reportedly killed in the ensuing melee while 14 others sustained varying degrees of injury.

It was gathered that some Muslims had gathered at their worship centre, Kamorudeen Central Mosque, located at Oluode Aranyin in Osogbo for a 'special prayer for Nigeria in distress' which started at noon.

The Imam of the mosque and the leader of Quomardeen Muslim Society of Nigeria, the organiser of the prayer, Alhaji Kazeem Yusuf, confirmed that the leader of the organisation in Iwo, Osun State, Moshood Salawudeen, was shot in the head and he gave up the ghost on the spot while 14 faithful, including five children, were injured.

At about 2:30p.m. on Sunday, when they were already rounding off the prayer, the masquerades, accompanied by a crowd of other traditional worshippers, were said to have processed to the area during their "Odun Egungun (Masquerade Fes-

tival).

Led by a popular traditionalist in Osogbo, Kayode Esuleke, the masquerades and other traditional worshippers were said to have had a hot exchange with some Muslims who complained of disturbance by the drums being beaten by the followers of the masquerades.

The altercation allegedly triggered a clash between the two religious adherents as they started hurling stones and clubs at one another. In a video obtained by *The Guardian* on Monday, the Muslims were able to chase the traditionalists away from the mosque.

A few minutes after, the traditionalists were said to have remobilised and allegedly armed with guns before attacking the Muslims, damaging the mosque and a vehicle parked close by.

Addressing a press conference in Osogbo, the leader of the Muslim organisation, Alhaji Yusuf, explained that two policemen escorted the traditionalists to the mosque before the alleged attack and that Esuleke and his followers were armed with guns.

A Camry car and mosque windows were destroyed in the attack. The deceased

was said to have been deposited at UNIOSUN teaching hospital mortuary.

When *The Guardian* visited Esuleke's residence in Osogbo on Monday, he was not around but his son, Fasola Esuleke, denied wielding guns during the masquerade festival procession.

He said there was an attempt by a Muslim to pull off the masquerade's veil during the procession.

He accused the Imam of the mosque, Alhaji Kazeem, of always going against adherents of other religions. He denied that his father carried a gun during the procession and claimed that the traditionalists defended themselves against attacks.

MEANWHILE, a Coalition of Muslim Rights Activists of Nigeria (CON-RAN), Osun State chapter, has issued a 72-hour ultimatum to the state government to arrest and prosecute Esuleke and others that were involved in the alleged attack and murder.

When contacted on the telephone, the Police Public Relations Officer, Yemisi Opalola, confirmed the incident but stated that the policemen with the masquerades and other tradi-

tionals were ensuring that their procession was orderly and peaceful.

Meanwhile, gunmen, on Sunday evening, abducted a resident in Ora-Igbomina, a community in the Ifedayo Local Government Area of Osun State. *The Guardian* gathered that the abduction created tension in the community that shares boundaries with Ekiti and Kwara States.

The victim is said to be the daughter of Alhaji Bayo Fulani, the *Ga-Fulani* of the affected community. It was gathered that the gunmen stormed the residence of Bayo Fulani and whisked his daughter away to an unknown destination.

Fulani, who spoke to *The Guardian* on the phone, said the gunmen came in their numbers and attempted to kill him.

He said: "They shot at me severally. As they were unable to overpower me, they descended on my daughter and took her away."

"They came with one Ak-47 and two pump-action guns," he disclosed.

Confirming the development, Osun Police Command's spokesperson, Yemisi Opalola, said some policemen had been deployed to the scene of the incident.