

Akere auto-spare market fire: Controversy trails death of 65-year-old security guard

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Scene of the fire incident...yesterday

- **Residents allege masked men burn down market**
- **Lagos police begin probe, promise to update Lagosians**
- **Victims get N15 million reprieve from Labour governorship candidate**

A 65-year-old security guard was confirmed dead, while traders counted losses, yesterday, following an early morning fire that engulfed the popular Akere auto-spare parts market in Ajegunle, Lagos.

The multi-billion naira market located at Kirikiri Road, Akere Bus Stop, Olodi-Apapa, was second only to Ladipo auto spare parts market, along Oshodi-Apapa express way.

Residents alleged that the fire started at about 3:00 a.m., yesterday, after masked men came with four motorcycles carrying two persons each and guns along with a shuttle bus with seven persons.

They claimed the gunmen shot sporadically to scare residents off to prevent resistance.

The residents said the gunmen attempted to attack the market last week Thursday, March 2, 2023, but were overpowered by local security.

According to them, the market leaders reported the matter to the Divisional Police Officer (DPO), Tolu Post, Etuk Akaninyene, who gave them assurance that they will handle the situation.

A man whose sister lost her goods to the fire told The Guardian that millions have gone down the drain because some people want to start what they can't finish.

“My sister is in serious pain. I hope justice will be done because this is a targeted attack,” he lamented.

But when The Guardian reached out to Akaninyene, he said he could not speak on the issue, insisting that all enquiries be directed at Lagos State Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Benjamin Hundeyin.

MEANWHILE, Lagos State Police Command said it has commenced an investigation into the outbreak.

The state Commissioner of Police, Idowu Owohunwa, in a statement, urged Lagosians to remain calm, as the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID) has been directed to take over the investigation towards unravelling the true circumstances surrounding the attack.

Speaking with The Guardian, the Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Benjamin Hundeyin, said: “I didn't get the report of any attack but we have commenced an investigation and we will keep Nigerians updated on our findings. ”

Also, Director, Lagos State Fire and Rescue Service, Margaret Adeseye, said the cause of the fire will require a detailed investigation to ascertain, while a post-incident enumeration is needed to account for the number of Lock-up shops and wares lost.

She said: “The fire was reported at about 3:28.a.m. and the Ajegunle Fire Station moved to the scene and were later joined by the Sari-Iganmu and Ilupeju Fire crews of the Agency to subdue the raging fire and salvage a nearby major petroleum filling station with a fully loaded 33,000 litres Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) among other adjoining buildings.”

Meanwhile, Labour Party governorship candidate for Saturday election, Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour, has visited the scene and donated N15 million to ameliorate sufferings of Ajegunle fire victims.