

Pandemonium as security operatives kill trader in Imo

From Collins Osuji, Owerri

THERE was pandemonium, yesterday, at Timber and Allied Industrial Market, Naze, in Owerri, following the killing of a trader, Ebere Chibuikwe, by a bullet accidentally discharged by yet to be identified security operatives. *The Guardian* gathered that the victim, who hailed from Onicha in Ezinihitte Local Council of the state, was killed at his business premises.

An eyewitness said his death resulted from an attempt by security operatives to arrest some traders in the market over undisclosed reasons, but were resisted by their colleagues in

the market. It was further gathered that it was in attempt to scare the people away and possibly avoid being lynched by the mob that the said security personnel started shooting sporadically in the air. Unfortunately, a pellet from the shooting landed on the victim's chest, leading to his instant death.

The incident sent shockwaves through the market, resulting in widespread outrage among the traders, who took to the streets protesting the tragedy and demanding justice.

An eyewitness, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said: "We were at our various shops this morning when some police officers

came to make an arrest. We were all pleading for the freedom of our colleagues arrested, the next thing we heard was a gunshot. We found that the trader had been shot on the spot, and we took him to hospital where he was confirmed dead."

Also, the victim's uncle, who spoke with newsmen, expressed disbelief over the incident and called for justice.

He said: "I heard about this development about an hour ago, when I returned from work. I quickly rushed down to the scene. This is a marketplace, and I don't understand this harassment."

President of the market, Chief Ezejiofor Elias, said: "Just this afternoon, I got a call that the police shot one of our members. I inquired about what led to his death, and they told me that the police frequently come around to harass people."

"The late Ebere was at his shop. If the deceased had done something wrong, they would have met with the market leaders. We were surprised that the police came and shot Ebere. We don't want to take the law into our hands. We call for justice. We are not happy with what is happening."



CP Mohammed Barde