

Imo traders accuse police of killing member

From Collins Osuji, Owerri

A market group, under the aegis of Imo State Amalgamated Markets and Traders Association (ISAMATA), yesterday, alleged that operatives of Imo State Police Command were behind the killing of one of their members, Ebere Chibuike.

The deceased, popularly known as Wazzi, a trader at Timber and Allied Industrial Market, Nazi, Owerri, was killed, Monday morning, by men suspected to be police officers, who came to arrest some traders for undisclosed reasons.

However, spokesperson of the Police, Henry Okoye, and his National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) counterpart, Shehu Lamuwa, denied involvement.

Okoye said: "Information we have gathered so far indicates that it wasn't the police that shot the trader. However, the DPO in charge of the area has since mobilised to the scene for on-the-spot analysis and discreet investigation."

But President of ISAMATA, Emmanuel Ezeanochie, flayed the police for not taking responsibility for the killing.

According to him, "The police cannot deny being responsible for the killing because all the traders in the market know them (police), even by their names."

He said the market association has severally resisted the activities of the policemen, who, according to him, regularly visit the market to harass, molest, intimidate traders and arrest those who have committed no offence.

Ezeanochie said he could have mobilised his members for a protest against the incident but decided to toe the line of dialogue considering the security condition in the state.

He said: "I don't know what to tell them if they deny being responsible for the killing. Who doesn't know them by their faces in the market? There is no week that passes without the police visiting the market and harassing and intimidating the traders."