

National

Death toll rises to eight in clash between Anambra govt agency, tipper drivers

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The death toll from a violent clash between members of the Anambra Special Anti-Touts Agency (SASA) and the Association of Tipper Drivers of Nigeria, Anambra State chapter, at Oba, Idemili South Local Council, has risen to eight.

The confrontation, which occurred last weekend, has sparked a blame game between SASA operatives and the tipper drivers over the cause of the incident. According to investigations, the clash began on January 30, when SASA operatives

raided a tipper drivers' garage in Oba, believed to be a hideout for criminals and drug users. During the operation, they arrested suspects, including one identified as Okoli, who reportedly confessed to various crimes and provided information about other members.

SASA returned to the garage on January 31 to apprehend additional suspects but were met with resistance from angry Oba youths. Witnesses claimed that during the confrontation, a blue tipper truck driven by one Chibeze rammed into a Hiace bus conveying SASA personnel, killing three people on the spot and injuring several others.

Tension escalated as Oba youths, armed with weapons, allegedly attacked SASA operatives, leading to multiple casualties. Sources revealed that the youths initially prevented first-aid assistance for the injured, further exacerbating the crisis.

SASA spokesperson, Mrs Karen James, alleged that tipper drivers initiated the violence by ramming their vehicles into SASA personnel. She claimed that the tipper garage in Oba has long been a hub for criminal activities and drug trafficking, adding that SASA operatives acted within the law.

"Before the attack, SASA operatives had arrested several suspects from Oba who confessed to various crimes and revealed their sponsors," James said. She emphasised SASA's commitment to maintaining order and urged law enforcement to investigate and bring perpetrators to justice.

However, the Chairman of the Onitsha Zone of the Tipper Drivers Association, Comrade Chukwuebuka Uneke, accused SASA of overzealousness and intimidation. He claimed SASA operatives targeted tipper drivers who failed to assist in apprehending a fleeing tout, leading to the confrontation. Uneke urged the state government to intervene and prevent further escalation.

Meanwhile, the National Coordinator of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), Chinedu Obigwe, supported SASA's actions, stating that operatives had successfully arrested a drug dealer at the garage, prompting their return for further arrests.

The Anambra State Police Command spokesperson, Too-chukwu Ikenga, confirmed the incident but noted that details remain sketchy. Federal Road Safety

Corps Sector Commander, Margaret Onabe, attributed the accident to a route violation, reporting four deaths and one injury.

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