

19 Arrested For Allegedly Setting Police Van Ablaze

Nineteen persons were arrested on Tuesday for allegedly setting ablaze a police patrol van during a violent clash between motorcyclists and police surveillance team which claimed two lives in Eket, Akwa Ibom State.

DAILY INDEPENDENT gathered that the setting ablaze of the police patrol van belonging to Eket Divisional Police Station was fallout of last week's ban on the operations of motorcyclists in the area.

Our correspondent gathered that the police authorities in Eket, have employed several means to enforce the restriction order on commercial motorcyclists between the hours of 6 p.m. and 6 a.m. to checkmate the upsurge of crime in the area.

Our correspondent gathered that some motorcyclists resisted the order as they continued to operate beyond the stipulated time.

To enforce the ban therefore, Emman Okposin, a commercial motorcyclist, said the police surveillance team had to adopt the approach of chasing motorcycle operators popularly known as okada from the road from 5:30 p.m. as they beat defaulters and impound their motorcycles.

Okposin said the approach last Sunday night turned out fatal as one of the cyclists was shot dead by the police while chasing the operators from the road.

He said, "Last Sunday our member was shot dead in the night and the corpse was deposited in mortuary at Emmanuel General Hospital, Eket."

Okposin said the incident which caused the cyclists to revolt occurred on Monday when a policeman beat a



The burnt vehicle

motor-cyclist to coma before the victim was rushed to the hospital."

He said the victim identified as Udo from Idung Udoe in the area died the previous night while receiving treatment at Emmanuel General Hospital, Eket.

He said, "Our member, Udo, from Idung Udoe in Eket died last night from injuries he got in the hands of police so we revolted."

He said the youths and all motorcyclists' operators took the corpse to Eket local government council and later to the area police station as the council chairman, Frank Archibong, was not available to address them.

Okposin said the police prevented them from entering their station, so they had

to return the corpse to the mortuary.

He said all the cyclists and the youths regrouped and moved to police checkpoint along James Town road and burnt their patrol vehicle as the policemen at the checkpoint escaped.

When contacted, the Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Odiko McDon, said the restriction order was from the state government as a strategy to check cultism and other forms of criminality in the area.

McDon who denied knowledge of death of any motorcycle operator in connection with the police enforcement of the restriction order, however, vowed that the police would stop at nothing in ensuring that the order, which



McDon

helped to checkmate criminality in Ikot Ekpene is implemented to the later in Eket.

He reported that 19 persons have so far been arrested in connection with the incident.

He, however, claimed that the burnt Volvo van had a mechanical fault and was stationary.

"The restriction order by the state government is not just in Eket, but also in Ikot Ekpene and other troubled areas and the police are merely carrying out the order. We are saddled with the responsibility of implementing the law. We are not using force, so I am not aware of any death, and we would stop at nothing in ensuring that we implement the order. It worked in Ikot Ekpene and today, people are able to sleep with two eyes closed.

"They razed our Volvo that had a mechanical fault and we have arrested 19 persons in connection with that. We are certain that lots of criminal activities would be curtailed in the area if the motorcycle riders are restricted within these hours," he said.