

Teargas kills three-month old baby in Ibadan

RESIDENTS of Popoyemoja area of Ibadan, Oyo State yesterday watched in pain and disbelief the ruins of Monday's attack on innocent people by the rampaging thugs believed to be supporters of a People's Democratic Party (PDP) chieftain in Ibadan.

Among the victims was a 27-year old nursing mother, Monsurat who lost her three-month old baby boy in the heat of the bloody attack on the neighbourhood.

The infant was said to have suddenly stopped breathing where he was laid on the bed when a cannister of teargas landed among the buildings where he was sleeping.

Sources said that all efforts made by the neighbours to revive the baby failed.

A visit to the area yesterday by *The Nation* revealed wrecked vehicles and motorcycles popularly called *Okada*, which littered the only major road that goes through Popoyemoja to Idi-Arere areas of the city where thugs numbering about 250 had

From Oseheye Okwuofu,
Ibadan

a free day on Monday.

Similar fate befell Mr. Nasiru Muibi of Isale Agbede area of Popoyemoja, who recounted how his BMW car was torched by thugs, with him and his daughter escaping death by the whisks.

He was said to have parked the car safely by the roadside unknown to him that it would soon be burnt.

"We started noticing some strange faces around and that called to our senses that another trouble is in the air as a build-up to Saturday's mayhem; not quite 25 minutes we saw buses, loaded with these thugs wielding cutlasses, knives and later some deafening shots of guns. All of us had to flee to safety. As if that was not enough, they descended on cars, seizing every available *Okada* and breaking into homes and shops, carting away anything they could lay their hands on. As you can see, many vehicles were set ablaze. It was like a war situation, we have never

seen these," a resident, Mr. Alao explained.

Mr. Muibi was said to have fainted twice since the incident that led to the loss of his BMW, but he was not alone in the agony, many were seen yesterday mourning, wailing and raining curses on the perpetrators of the evil.

Also, several shop owners affected by the attack poured their emotions out and they cried for help. They said the shock and loss suffered in the attack were too great for them to bear.

According to the shop owners, mostly women, the perpetrators of the crime have plunged them into heavy debts as goods worth thousands of naira were plundered by the thugs.

Investigation revealed that there had been an increase in exodus of people to other parts of the city, while many of the residents sent their belongings to relatives living in other areas in anticipation of a reprisal attack.

At the campaign office of the former governor of the state, Alhaji Lam Adesina, the sight of

the one-storey building reminded one of a war situation.

The building was a shadow of its former self as its doors and window frames were destroyed and defaced.

Not one of the vehicles parked in front of the building numbering about five was spared by the thugs.

The tarred roads were decorated with white paint, sharp car windscreens lay all over the place which sent jitters down the spines of onlookers.

Several people who were victims of deep cuts from the thugs' cutlasses were drenched in blood. A source said the only hospital at Popoyemoja, known as Duntan Maternity, was said to have rejected to accept the injured for fear of attack by the rampaging thugs.

Relative peace has, however, returned to the area yesterday. A detachment of anti-riot policemen with an Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) have since been positioned at strategic locations to forestall further breakdown of law and order.