

Five policemen, 20 others killed in Ibadan drivers' clash

• 10 vehicles burnt, 83 vandalised

IT was a bloody day in Ibadan, the Oyo State capital, yesterday.

Twenty-five persons, including five policemen, were reportedly killed as the ancient city erupted in violence.

It happened when factions of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) engaged one another in a gun battle.

The Police denied the casualty figure in a telephone interview.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Miss Olabisi Okuwobi, said three people were killed.

Their bodies, she said, were brought to the Police Headquarters by Alhaji Lateef Salako, aka Eleweomo.

Miss Okuwobi insisted that no policeman was killed.

From Bisi Oladele, Ibadan

The attack was allegedly carried out by Eleweomo's supporters about 1.30am near the Olomi, Ibadan secretariat of the union.

They were said to have been ambushed by supporters of the reinstated chairman of the union, Alhaji Lateef Akinso, aka Tokyo.

About 83 vehicles, including exotic cars belonging to some leaders of both factions, were reportedly vandalised.

Many houses were shattered by bullets. Residents were awake throughout the night as sporadic gunshots rented the air till dawn.

Scores of residents were wounded. They are being treated in hospitals.

Hundreds of expended cartridges littered the union's secretariat.

The assailants allegedly entered the union's secretariat, broke the doors and destroyed office furniture and other equipment.

A source said the attackers forcibly entered the secretariat amidst shootings after destroying a black Sport Utility Vehicle (SUV) belonging to Tokyo.

The union leader narrowly escaped being killed; he has since gone underground.

The assailants were said to have mobilised to the NURTW secretariat to sack Tokyo, who moved into the building after the National Industrial Court (NIC), Abuja, reinstated him early August.

He was said to have turned the secretariat to his home to prevent Eleweomo's faction from taking it over.

The Oyo State Government banned the union hours after Tokyo was sworn in as chairman but he has remained resolute in reclaiming his mandate, saying he would not vacate the secretariat for Eleweomo's faction.

The union's Secretary, Mr. Lekan Aleshinloye, said Tokyo's supporters decided to keep vigil at the secretariat after getting wind of the alleged plot to sack their chairman.

Aleshinloye said Tokyo's supporters advanced towards the attackers when they heard gunshots as the latter moved towards the secretariat.

He said they confronted the assailants near the Academy Bridge.

Aleshinloye said Tokyo's supporters retreated when they realised that Eleweomo's group was allegedly led by some policemen from the State Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS).

But the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Baba Bolanta, denied the allegation that the command backed the attackers.