

## Jailbreak in Lagos



A yet to be ascertained number of prisoners were believed to have died as soldiers and prison officials engaged fleeing prisoners during a jailbreak in Lagos yesterday.

Scores of other prisoners were also said to have sustained varying degrees of injuries from the incident that occurred at the Kirikiri Medium Prison located in the Apapa area of the nation's former capital around 3.30 pm.

Already, the Nigerian Prisons Service (NPS) has ordered investigation into the incident, promising to release the details today.

But a senior official of the NPS said the incident occurred after the inmates protested some privileges denied by a senior official who had just been posted to the prison, one of which was the use of cell phones by the inmates.

The protest later degenerated to attempts by some of the inmates to escape from the prison, prompting the deployment of the armed security personnel stationed outside the prison to prevent them from escaping.

Apart from the prison officials who also made use of sniffer dogs, personnel of the Nigerian Navy (NN), Navy Town and Kirikiri Police Station were also said to have been called in to assist the men of the Nigerian Prisons Service to secure the massive gates of the prison.

The spokesman for the NPS, Mr. Ope Fatinikun, had broken the news of the jailbreak at the end of a three-day security session organised by the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) in Abuja.

He said: "In line with the spirit of this retreat, I want to inform the media that we have just recorded a jailbreak at the Kirikiri Medium Security Prison in Lagos. We will provide details on Saturday (today)."

When later called by our correspondent, Fatinikun said: "The incident occurred at about 3.30pm, but prison

warders were able to manage the situation. Like I said, I cannot give you the details till tomorrow.

Another source, however, said the warders, who were caught unawares, tried to manage the situation.

“As expected, there was a stampede during the jailbreak and some people were wounded. We are still trying to take stock to know the cause, the injured and those who escaped.”

The source said it was learnt that the revolt might not be unconnected with the overcrowded nature of the prison yard.

The 1,700-capacity prison had 2,517 inmates as at the time the immediate past Chief Judge of Lagos State, Justice Ayotunde Phillips (rtd), visited the yard on June 16 for the Jail Delivery Exercise.

Out of the 2,517 inmates, 2,382 were rated as awaiting trial with only 135 convicts.

The former Chief Judge, who expressed concern about the congestion at the prison, could only set free 71 inmates

It was also gathered that some of the inmates had been complaining about overstretched facilities at the prison.

But another source said the jailbreak might have to do with the alleged attempt by some criminals to set free their colleagues who were detained at the facility.

“The NPS management has ordered an investigation into the incident. We will release the details in the next 24 to 48 hours,” the source added.