

Four feared dead as police, task force storm church

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•The burnt inner part of the church... yesterday

•A relative of one of the deceaseds crying...yesterday

Four persons were feared yesterday when the Lagos State Task Force on Land Grabbers led by the police stormed a church in Makoko, Yaba.

The task force, some hoodlums and the police were said to have stormed The Act of Apostle Church over a land dispute. They reportedly came with over 30 police vans from different divisions, including Adekunle and Ikeja

They allegedly broke down the fence of the church, and set its hall ablaze. They were said to have shot sporadically, leaving many injured.

Four of the injured were said to have died at press time.

Residents milled last night discussing the incident. Some were in tears.

Many of the white chairs in the church and speakers were burnt. The ceilings and windows were broken. A tricycle parked in the church compound was also burnt and the glasses of some cars were destroyed. Broken bottles also littered the streets.

Some residents blamed the task force, the hoodlums and the police for all the damage.

The body of Kolawole Iwalokun was brought to the community around 5pm. He was said to have died where he was being treated. Some members of the community brought his body to the church, but the police wanted to go away with it. The police shot and sprayed tear gas; people ran away. Bullets were over Kolawole's body.

The Nation learnt that some members of the community fought back as they stoned the police.

An eye witness, Nejo Olanrewaju, said he was in his house around 10am when he saw an expectant mother running into the passage of his house.

"I came out of my room and saw many policemen with some hoodlums carrying guns, cutlasses and other weapons in front of the church. I walked up to them and asked what their mission was. One of them told another to throw me into the task force van; I told them they cannot do

that to me. We engaged in a little strife and one of the officials said I should be released.

“The next thing I saw was that they started shooting, not into the air but sporadically. They shot into every direction; a lot of people were affected. I rushed to the community head to see what I could do to help. The whole place was destroyed, many people died.”

Another resident, Levi Ipanse, said he ran back from school when he heard of the incident.

He said: “When I got here, I saw over 50 policemen, with hoodlums and touts with guns, charms and cutlasses. The hoodlums were in task force uniform. I heard gun shots and saw blood stains, many people are dead.

“Kolawole Iwalokun, 40, Junior Olaranmoye, in his 20’s is dead. Kolawole is married with children, he is a businessman. Junior is a fashion designer

“A lot of people were injured; the injuries sustained were bad. They were chasing us; we did not argue with them when they first came. It was when we saw that they had burnt the church that we had to retaliate. Being youths, we were annoyed. It was the police that set their station ablaze; they did this to use it against us. They also broke the fence of the police station.

According to him, what the police came to do is illegal.

An Executive in the church, Bamidele Ogunmayi, said a land issue led to the crisis.

“The police have done badly, they have supported area boys, killed four of our people, about 20 of our youths are injured with gunshots, and they are receiving treatment. They have burnt our church, broken our fence. We do not know the interest of the police in land matters. They have impinged on our fundamental right; they also arrested some of our youths.

“The police were about 50, the land grabbers and hoodlums were about 30 and were in the task force uniform. The police broke our fence, when the youths wanted to ask them what the matter was, they started shooting. We want justice against the people that violated our human right,” Ogunmayi said.