

# One dies as police, youths stop suspended council officials from invading offices

• Scores injured

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***From Damian Duruiheoma, Owerri***

At least one person was reported dead and scores injured on Monday in Imo State during a scuffle between the suspended local government officials and the interim management committee members of the councils.

The incident happened across the 27 council areas. But the one at Umundugba, the headquarters of Isu Local Government, saw Mr. Ahamefule Maduabuchi, a suspended supervisor from Umundugba, being killed in a scuffle between the two contending forces.

Police spokesman Orlando Ikeoku said that the incident that led to his death was still sketchy.

In other council areas, some suspended chairmen, councillors and their supporters, who are members of the All Progressives Congress (APC) faction of ex-governor Rochas Okorocha, invaded local government secretariats across the state to forcefully take over the councils.

The chairmen of the Interim Management Councils repelled the invading sacked APC chairmen, councillors and hundreds of supporters from the council secretariats.

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The suspended faction of Okorocha's APC's chairmen and councillors had relied on the Supreme Court judgment delivered in the suit between the Ekiti State governor and council chairmen.

In Owerri Municipal Council, it was gathered that the suspended Chairman, Nze Joe Agor and the councillors had allegedly mobilised over 100 thugs, who were used to invade the council secretariat to forcefully take over the offices.

The former chairman also barricaded the entrance to the council before he and his supporters were dislodged by security agencies from the council after over 30 minutes of scuffle between the invading APC members and supporters of the Chairman, Ebere Chukwuemeka and members of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

Chukwuemeka said: "The former council chairman, Nze Joe Agor, who belongs to the Okorocha's faction of the APC, had mobilised hundreds of thugs and invaded the council secretariat at 6:30am, but unfortunately we had alerted security agencies over the looming attack because we did not want to take the law into our hands. So, it was the security agents who dispersed them from the secretariat and workers have gone back to work."

One of the council workers, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that but for the quick intervention of security agents, no one could have predicted what would have happened as the Transition Committee (TC) chairman had mobilised PDP members to counter APC members.

"We thank God for the quick intervention of the security agents, who dispersed them because nobody could have known what would have happened because the chairman had already mobilised PDP members in readiness to deal with them, but the quick response of the security agents prevented what would have been a bloodbath today."

In Aboh Mbaise Council, the former chairman, Prince Chidi Nwaturuocha, was beaten to stupor by youths and supporters of the PDP.

It was gathered that Prince Nwaturuocha and his supporters had broken into the office of the Aboh Mbaise council chairman at 6am where he sat, took pictures of himself and posted same on his Facebook accounts.

However, he was beaten to stupor by supporters and youths of the PDP.

One of the invading councillors, Mr. Jasper Nwachukwu, was said to have been injured on the head when a police officer allegedly used the butt of his gun on him.

In Owerri West Council Area, it was gathered that the Transition Committee Chairman, Innocent Ekenma and his committee members were beaten up and chased out of the office by the protesters.

But, Ekenma told our correspondent that the APC suspended chairmen and their supporters were stopped 200 metres away from the secretariat before they could even gain access to the council.

“We resisted them; they did not even go beyond the market square. Everywhere is calm now and I am in charge. Whoever told you that they beat us is telling lies,” he said.

A similar situation also played out in Njaba Council Area, where it was learnt that the interim Chairman, Obodoshaa Agwubuo, ran away from the council when the suspended officials came.

He, however, posted pictures of himself and that of his committee members in his office, insisting that he was still in charge.

The situation was similar in Owerri North Council. The incumbent Chairman, Solomon Onwuegbuchulam, also prevented the APC suspended chairman and councillors with over 500 supporters from coming close to the gate of the council.

Orlu, Nwangele, Orsu, Ehime Mbano, Isiala Mbano, Ahiazu Mbaize, Oru East , Oru West, Ohaji/Egbema and Ngor Okpala recorded no such situation.

Command spokesman Ikokwu said the police were on ground to avert an impending breach of the peace.

He said that the APC chairmen, who were coming for reinstatement, could not produce a valid Supreme Court judgment they claimed vested on them to occupy their former positions.

The police spokesman noted that the suspended chairmen were relying on Ekiti State judgment, which, according to him, although similar, should never be used as a yardstick.