

Tension in Okene as gunmen kill masquerade custodian, two others

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The masquerades on display at the event.

Okene township in Kogi State was, on Saturday, thrown into confusion and tension over the murder of a masquerade custodian, Yusuf Adabenege, and two others, Zubairu Musa and Yakubu Mohammed, by unknown gunmen.

The people were said to have been shot at close range by the gunmen at Oro, outskirts of Okene town on Friday night.

Sunday Tribune gathered that the deceased persons were driving a Ford Ranger Pick-Up van when the gunmen rounded them up and opened fire on them.

It was also learnt that Adabenege until his demise was the custodian of a masquerade called "Sementi" that was expected to perform next Tuesday during the annual "Ekwechi festival."

The killing came barely nine months after the Achewuru masquerade custodian, Abdulrahman Yakubu, was also murdered in cold blood.

The masquerade custodian and the driver of the vehicle were said to have died on the spot, while the third occupant died later.

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The development, however, led to apprehension in the town on Saturday as aggrieved youths believed to be supporters of the deceased went on a rampage to protest his death.

The youths numbering over 100 were armed with guns sticks, stones and other dangerous weapons and shot into the air making residents to scamper for safety.

Many of the ceremonies that were billed for Saturday were either cancelled or abruptly ended due to the tension caused by the incidence in Okene and its environs.

The situation was later brought under control by men of the state police command led by the commissioner, Ali Janga, and the military that were drafted to the area disperse the protesters.

The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Kogi state command, Mr William Aya, said that the command was doing everything possible to track down the hoodlums.

He said, "We received reports that unknown armed men shot sporadically at one Ford Ranger was driven by one Zubairu Musa of Upogoro Okene aged 42 years with two occupants namely Yusuf Adabenege a custodian of Sementi masquerade and Yakubu Mohammed of Irevucheba, Okene aged 45 years.

"The driver and Yusuf Adabenege died on the spot. The CP Ali Janga, it was gathered has visited the scene for on the spot Assessment where directed state CID to carry out an investigation immediately on the matter".

According to him, the CP had assured the public on the adequate security of lives and property, saying that the police would ensure that perpetrators are arrested and prosecuted.

The state governor, Alhaji Yahaya Bello, in his reaction to the incident, promised to apprehend the perpetrators and warned the people against taking laws into their hands.

The governor during his visit to the family of the deceased said his administration would not tolerate break down of law and order in the state.

He assured that the security agents would do everything possible to unmask those behind the killings.