

Sumal staff protest: One dead, 12 suspects arrested—Police

Say protest based on false information NLC calls stakeholders meeting

By Oluwatoyin Malik and Nurudeen Alimi

FOLLOWING a protest by the staff of a Lebanese company, Sumal Group of Companies, also owners of Yale Foods, in Ibadan, Oyo State, on Monday over purported non-payment of federal government-granted palliative given to their employer, it has been said that two lives were lost while another individual allegedly sustained bullet wound.

This figure was however debunked by the state police

command through its Public Relations Officer, SP Adewale Osifeso, who stated that only one person, suspected to be a hoodlum who hijacked the protest, was found dead and the cause of death yet to be known.

The protesters, who were in their scores, had expressed their angst at their office at Town Planning area of Ring Road, Ibadan, about the non-payment of the palliative among the staff, with one staff who spoke behind the camera in a video recording stating that he and his colleagues were fighting for

palliative paid by the Federal Government to civil servants and employees of private companies.

"Yale refused to pay our palliative, so we are here fighting for it. Other private companies have paid to their workers. Yale has refused to pay ours despite federal government's instruction. President Bola Tinubu asked them not to pay tax but use the money to pay palliative, but they refused to do so. Instead of listening to our protests, Yale decided to bring in police to stop us from asking for our rights. Yale said that it

is not under Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC)," the staff stated.

Things however took a new turn as it was alleged that security personnel, in charge of ensuring that there was no breakdown of law and order, fired warning shots and three of the company staff were allegedly hit by stray bullets, with two of them dead instantly, while the remaining one was injured.

The worker said that the injured staff was put on a motorcycle and was about to be conveyed to where they could seek medical help

when he gave up the ghost and they were conveying his body towards the second office at 7up area when police moved in on them, making them to disperse hurriedly.

He said that the company's security men picked the body and took it inside the premises, prompting their demand for the release of the remains of their colleague and setting part of the office at 7up area of Oluyole Estate ablaze.

In an interview, the brother of one of the two workers reportedly hit by bullets, who was also a worker with Sumal narrated his experience: "My brother and I came to work today (Monday). We were both working at Yale One. My brother was a full staff while I was contract staff. He was working as a Packer. When we got to the Sumal factory, I entered, but my brother did not enter with me. He stayed outside. As we heard rumour of chaos outside the factory, we were released and told to go to our homes. As we came out, we saw a crowd. The people were throwing stones, with every one of them displaying fury, anger.

"Before I could reach Yale Five, one of my friends told me that my brother, Olabode, has been shot. He has been working at Sumal for over two years. I came to our headquarters to see my brother, but I've not seen his corpse," he said, adding that he didn't really know what caused the agitation by his co-workers. "All I heard was on the discussion about government's palliative given to private companies," he stated.

Efforts to reach the management of Sumal proved abortive, the Nigerian Tribune gathered that the company, is not under obligation of distributing palliatives and the management was said to have made it known to those who came for morning shift on the day of the protest. After explaining things to them, the morning shift workers reportedly agreed and left.

A source said that the deceased shown in a picture on the internet was not identified by the company as its staff and does not have any record relating to him, leading to the belief that he could have been a hoodlum.

When contacted, the police command's spokesman, SP Adewale Osifeso, told the Nigerian Tribune that one person was discovered to have died in the protest.

The PPRO said: "What we know is that miscreants came to hijack the protest. They burnt a vehicle, a part of the company, as well as destroyed company's

equipment. This suggests that some miscreants overwhelmed the initial protesters. That was why we had to come in and put an end to what was happening.

"Investigations are ongoing on the cause of this occurrence. We cannot ascertain who the deceased is. The case has been handed over to Homicide section while 12 suspects were arrested. We have taken charge of the place to forestall any further breakdown of law and order," he added.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, the PPRO said: "The Oyo State Police Command wishes to set the record straight concerning the disturbing violent protests that rocked one of the factories belonging to Sumal Foods, Oluyole extension Ibadan on Monday, 01/07/2024 around 1600hrs.

"Preliminary investigation reveals that the protest was premised on widespread false information authored and peddled by some of the workers concerning the disbursement of Palliative to all Private owned companies and firms in the Country.

"Their grouse however was that they were being denied the welfare package. Sadly, the protest was hijacked by criminal elements who forced their way into the factory, destroying vehicles and property worth millions of naira.

"One death was recorded during the violent protest. However, normalcy has since returned to the affected area, with the immediate deployment of Command's operational and tactical assets to prevent any possible future reoccurrence.

"So far, 12 suspects have been arrested in connection with the violent protest. Furthermore, the Commissioner of Police, Ayodele Sonubi, has ordered that the entire case be taken up by the Homicide Department of the Criminal Investigation Department with the Deputy Commissioner of Police directly in charge of investigations," the statement added.

Meanwhile, the Oyo State chapter of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) has summoned a stakeholders' meeting for today (Wednesday).

Oyo State NLC chairman, Comrade Kayode Martins, made this known while speaking with Nigerian Tribune by phone on Tuesday.

He said the meeting would have the leadership of National Union of Food Beverage and Tobacco Employees (NUFBE) in the state, that of SUMAL Foods and other relevant stakeholders in attendance.



Ekiti State governor, Mr Biodun Oyeibanji in a warm handshake with the new Head of Service, Dr (Mrs) Folakemi Olomolobi, during her inauguration at the Conference Hall, Governor's office, Ado-Ekiti, on Tuesday

Sultanate Council expresses readiness to work with Sokoto Emirate Amendment Bill

Olakunle Maruf Sokoto

AS the Sokoto State House of Assembly holds public hearing on the State Emirate Council Bill, the Sultanate Council has expressed readiness to work and support the Sokoto government as well as operate with any law made by the state government for the Sultanate Council.

Representative of the council at the public hearing on the bill for a law to further amend the Sokoto State Local Government Law 2008, Dr Muhammad Jabbi Kilgiri, stated this at the public hearing.

He said even before now, the council had always consulted with the state government before making any appointment whatsoever.

While addressing the public at the mini chamber of state

assembly, the Commissioner of Justice, Barrister Nasir Muhammad Binji, explained that the former law which was presented to the assembly for amendment was inconsistent with Nigeria's constitution.

He noted that in Nigeria constitution, the power only lies with the three arms of government: the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary, and that the power to appoint is solely vested in the executive arm of government.

However, he clarified that the Sultanate Council still retains the power to recommend the village and district heads for appointment subject to the governor's approval.

Binji explained that the proposed amended law is non-political nor a means to strip the Sultanate Council of its

power.

Others sections of the law to be amended according to Binji are sections to extend the tenure of elected local government chairmen from two to three years.

"There is no power given to the sultanate council to appoint. Section 76(2) of the Sokoto Local government and Chieftancy Law gives the sultanate council the power to appoint district and village heads in the state but with the approval of the sitting governor.

"So the section is inconsistent with the 1999 Constitution as amended and therefore it cannot stand. Because the power to appoint is the executive power and who exercise the power, is it not the Governor? This is the reason for the amendment. To correct the mistake of the past," he said.

On his part the chairperson of the coalition of civil society organizations (CSOs) in the state, Bello Gwadabawa, said if the amendment is for the purpose of good governance, the organization is in support of it.

In its submission Sokoto DNA a non-governmental organization, said it is against the amendment of Sections 75 and 76 which strip Sultanate Council power of appointing village or district heads.

The leader of the group and former member House of Representatives representing Dange/Shuni/ Tureta and Bodinga federal constituency, Dr Balarabe Kakale, explained that the amendment would whittle down the power of the Sultanate Council.