

Offa/Erin-Ile crisis: Witnesses indict Erin-Ile

Doyin Adebunsi, Ilorin

TWO witnesses, who testified before the Justice Hannah Ajayi-led Offa/Erin-Ile Disturbances, Destruction of Properties and Loss of Lives Judicial Commission of Inquiry on Thursday, told the panel that the June 6 crisis between Offa and Erin-Ile communities started from Erin-Ile.

The first witness, Joseph Ijaodola, who is one of the writers of the 34 memoranda before the commission, said he was passing through Erin-Ile, while coming from a part of Osun State to Offa on the fateful day, when he saw about 1,000 people aged be-

tween 20 and 30 years holding dangerous weapons, including cutlasses and guns heading for Offa from Erin-Ile.

He said after a short while, the rampaging youths were demolishing structures located very close to the buffer zone.

Under cross-examination by Chief Adegboyega Awomolo (SAN), and other counsel at the panel, the witness said he could not ascertain the names of the people wielding dangerous weapons but identified them as young Muslims.

The second witness, who was the deposed chairman of Offa Local Government Area of the state, Mr. Tajudeen Aro,

collaborated the claim of the first witness as he was led by the counsel to Offa community, Mr. Raheed Rabana, in his evidence-in-chief.

Aro said he was first informed about the crisis by four high chiefs sent by the traditional ruler of Offa, who informed him in his office that the Erin-Ile people were "at it again dismantling the late Maj. Bisi Oladipupo (rtd) industrial structure at Offa and that the action had generated so much tension in the town that I should take the appropriate step."

He added, "I was too reluctant because the attack and provocation have been too incessant from Erin-Ile. As

I was trying to buy time, the officer-in-charge, State Security Service in Offa came to my office with the high chiefs and insisted that there was an urgency in the message delivered to me. Besides, he said that there was so much tension in the town and that I had to move straight to the police station."

Aro, who described the situation as chaotic, said on getting to the police station, he was accompanied to the trouble spot by some policemen, the liaison officer of the local government and some members of staff of the council, where some people suspected to be from Erin-Ile were reportedly dismantling struc-

tures at the buffer zone.

He said some of the people were in front of the Ajegunle Motor Park constructing a foundation.

He claimed that some guards holding dangerous weapons were supervising both exercises.

On sighting the policemen that accompanied him, he said the workers took to their heels, paving the way for him to pack the working tools, and take them to the police station.

He alleged that the policeman, who accompanied him to the scene, also declined to make arrest, even when he was advised by him to do so.

He said the police officer insisted on reporting the incident to his superior officer before any arrest could be made.

He further told the commission that there was no confrontation between him and the people of Erin-Ile, while the working tools were being taken to the police station.

"While taking the tools, the police were at the spot and there was no direct confrontation between either me or the people that followed me to the scene, where the people of Erin-Ile were working on the site," he said.

Recalling the various phone calls he made to inform the secretary to the state government and the Deputy Governor, Chief Joel Ogundeji, about the crisis, the former chairman said after his complaint at the police station, he went to the Olofa of Offa and addressed the people in front of the monarch's palace on the need to maintain peace.

Aro, who tendered some photographs and two video tapes of the crisis as exhibits, said two persons lost their lives while many others were wounded on the first day of the crisis.



•L-R: Wife of the Chairman, Eti-Osa East Local Council Development Area, Mrs. Modupe Balogun-Etti; State Commissioner, Girls Guild Society, Mrs. Margaret Shobanjo; and Assistant State Commissioner of the group, Mrs. Elizabeth Bruce, during the conferment of the matron of the group on Balogun-Etti...on Thursday. Photo: Sunday Aborisdade.

Abdulsalami extols virtues of timely disengagement

Kunle Adeyemi, Ibadan

FORMER head of state, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, said on Thursday in Ibadan that it was the wisdom of God that made him quit the Aso Rock as a military ruler in 1999.

good health, the book would just be the first volume in the series to be published in honour of his good work.

The over 400-page book, with four sections and 29 chapters edited by Dr. Isaac Albert, was coordinated by

ing over of power should not be an issue, but the events and circumstances that surrounded the patriotic action.

Also speaking, former minister of information, Chief John Nwodo (Jr.), reminded

the gathering of when a notable politician complained to Abubakar that it was unfair for elections to be held during the Muslims' fasting period, and urged the head of state to extend his tenure.