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Four masquerades, six others in police net over violent clash

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Ten men, including four masquerades, have been arrested for 'malicious damage and conduct likely to cause a breach of peace' as principal actors in a violent clash between rival factions of masquerades in the Ago Ika area of Abeokuta, the state capital.

The suspects were arrested by men of the Ogun State Police Command on Monday for the Sunday evening fracas that was reported to have claimed three lives and left several others wounded.

During the clash, some vehicles and buildings were vandalised, properties were destroyed while a motor bike was burnt .

Our correspondent learnt on Monday that a violent masquerade makes an appearance once every year in the local community clashed with a rival masquerade from Lagos that also decided to make its outing same day.

The rival masquerade, sources told our correspondent, came with several heavily armed followers from Lagos, a development that was unknown to residents of the area.

The resident added that the arms, including guns, machetes and charms, concealed in a small coffin, became objects of war when the two factions met during their roadshows in the area.

Some residents claimed that about three people were killed but the state police command said nobody died during the fracas that ultimately halted the annual masquerade festival in the area.

Some of the frightened residents told our correspondent on Monday that they suspected that the clash was premeditated as the two factions had sufficient weapons to prosecute the battle.

Confirming the incident, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Femi Awoyale, said the four masquerades and the six men would soon be arraigned in court.

Awoyale, a Deputy Superintendent of Police, said, "They will be charged for malicious damage, conduct likely to cause a breach of peace and conduct likely to occasion harm."

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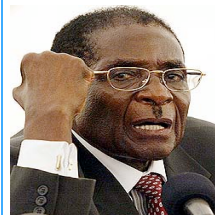
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