

Killing: Mob attacks bank property ...Three feared killed in Oshodi

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EGBEDA, a suburb of Lagos, became a battlefield of sorts on Wednesday when a group of irate youths clashed with some policemen attached to the branch of the United Bank for Africa in the area. A life was lost in the process.

Besides, three other persons were feared killed by policemen on the same day at Oshodi, when another team of security men had a clash with some young men described as "area boys."

The Egbeda incident, which happened at about 12pm, threw the community into anger and wailing after the victim was identified as Paul Bisiriyu, 31. He was popularly called "Maintain."

There were conflicting reports of the incident that led to the fracas. A faction said the youths were fighting over some money allegedly given to them by a popular Yoruba Fuji musician.

But the family of the deceased alleged that the crisis began after a vehicle hit and injured Bisiriyu on one of his legs.

However, our correspondents who visited the scene, learnt that the fight among the youths spread from the bus stop to the front of Jobady Hotel which is directly opposite the bank.

At this stage, the policemen tried to force the mob back and away from the bank premises. The youths were reportedly recalcitrant.

In a desperate attempt to protect the bank and keep the feuding youths at bay, a bullet went off from a policeman's rifle and hit Bisiriyu. He reportedly died on the spot.

This angered the youths who later reinforced to attack the bank and its security men. Bank officials, customers and others who thought it was a robbery attempt, began to make desperate calls to the police, hence there was a reinforcement.

In the process, four vehicles and the bank's security post were burnt; two other cars and some parts of the bank's property built with glasses were destroyed by the protesters.

Many business operators, traders, artisans and workers hurriedly closed their shops and business premises to prevent the looting of their businesses. Transport operators also avoided the route for hours.

Many residents of the area locked the gates to their homes for fear of being attacked by the

mob.

It took the intervention of a truckload of riot policemen drafted to the scene from PMF 22, Ikeja, before normalcy could be restored to the area.

The spot where Bisiriyu was shot and killed was still marked with blood, right in front of the gate of the hotel.

The corpse was allegedly moved away from the front of the hotel and dropped in front of the bank by the hotel employees.

Before the corpse was taken away by the police, no weapon was found or recovered from the victim and other witnesses of the death, who were arrested and taken away.

It was learnt that the victim was one of those who usually stayed in front of houses along the road, scouting for businesses.

Some of Bisiriyu's friends said he was a driver, who was currently out of a permanent job.

However, a policeman at the scene told one of our correspondents that the victim was an armed robber, who, in company with his gang members, attempted to enter and rob the bank.

But the wife and the mother of the deceased countered this account, insisting that a vehicle brushed Bisiriyu's leg, resulting in an argument in front of the hotel during which the guard shot at him.

Mrs. Bisiriyu also denied that her son was an armed robber. She said the police only wanted to label him with a bad name now that he was dead.

But the Lagos State Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Frank Mba, a Deputy Superintendent of Police, said that the deceased was killed while he and others were trying to snatch the rifle of one of the policemen on duty at the bank.

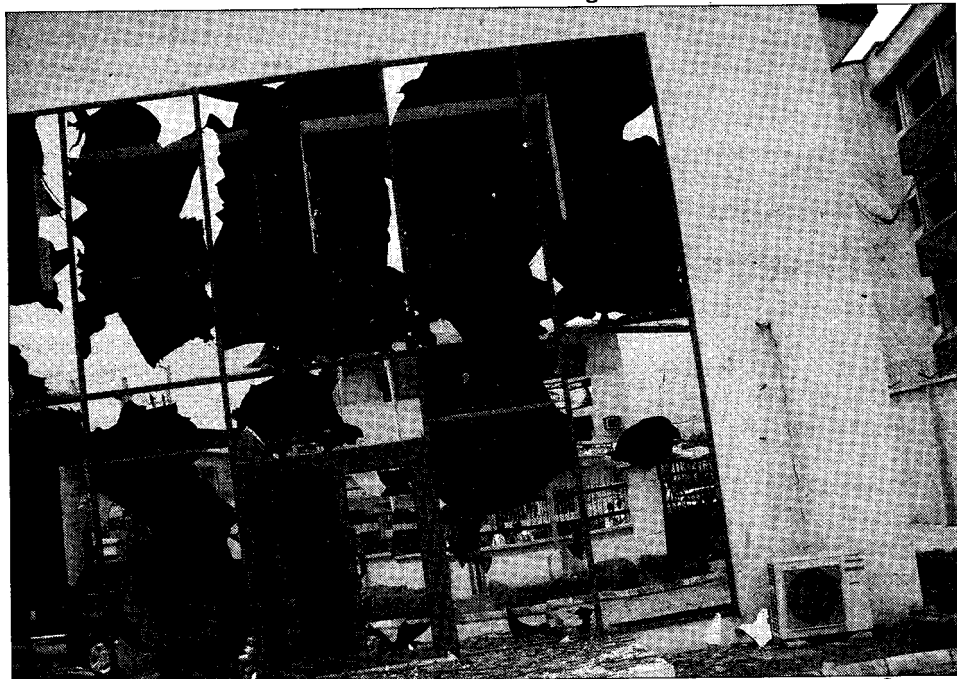
He said, "Since the deceased was trying to snatch the rifle of the policeman, no one can say categorically that the policeman shot him."

He, however, said that 30 suspects had been arrested in connection with the fracas.

Meanwhile, three people were feared killed during a bloody encounter between policemen attached to the Rapid Response Squad and street urchins popularly known as "area boys" in Oshodi.

Scores of other passers-by were injured in the crossfire which was reportedly started when policemen went to the area to raid some black spots.

The police spokesman denied any knowledge of deaths in the Oshodi incident.



• The bank's building after it was attacked in Lagos ... on Wednesday. Photo: Success Nwogu.