

Pandemonium as police kill protesting youths in Kogi

August 11, 2016



The deceased

Samson Folarin

There was pandemonium on Wednesday in Umomi community in the Ofu Local Government Area of Kogi State when some policemen attached to the Ugwolawo division opened fire on a crowd of protesting youths.

Two of the youths, identified as Okaye Omodi and Zekeri Mohammed, were shot dead by the officers, who immediately fled to their station.

PUNCH Metro gathered that the youths were protesting the arrest and detention of some residents, including a retired police officer identified as Peter Adama.

Our correspondent gathered that Adama and others were arrested around 11pm on Tuesday by some officers attached to the Special Anti-Robbery Squad.

A resident, Jeremiah Idege, said the operatives swooped on the community after some Fulani herdsman reported that their cows had been killed by some residents.

Idege claimed that the allegation was false, saying that the herdsman had actually invaded and destroyed the community's farmland.

He said. "We have issues with the Fulani herdsman and that has been on for as long as 15 years. They have been destroying our farmland with reckless abandon. As I speak with you, our community is wrecked.

"The little we have left was ravaged again by their cows recently and we reported the matter at the Ugwolawo Police Division. We were given four policemen to follow us to assess the level of damage done to our crops.

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Shares er, the police said we should come to a roundtable meeting with the herdsman so they could solve the case; but we refused. We just asked them to leave in peace. If we collect any money from them, they will say they have bought the lands and they will completely take over what we are left."

as learnt that a few days after the mediation failed, the herdsman reported that some cows had been killed by the residents.

Our correspondent was told that some of the community leaders followed the herdsman round to the alleged dead cows, but found none.

Another resident of the community, Sani Emmanuel, said the herdsman made the allegation because they were asked to leave the village.

Emmanuel said on Monday, the Fulani leaders reported again at the police station that another set

of cows had been killed.

He said, "On Tuesday, around 11pm, a group of policemen entered our village and started breaking doors and ransacking our homes. They arrested a lot of people, including Adama, who is retired police officer."

Emmnauel said the arrest did not go down well with the community youths, who trooped out on Wednesday to protest the continued destruction of their farmland without any help from the security agents.

PUNCH Metro was told that the youths blocked the roads and sang solidarity songs.

A witness, who did not want his name in print, said the protest was peaceful.

He said, "The protest, which started around 10am, was peaceful and it was within our village. Suddenly, armed policemen from the Ugwolawo division drove in and shot live bullets into the crowd. We all fled without knowing what had happened. The policemen had left before we knew they had killed two people."

The corpses were said to have been abandoned on the road until the Ata of Igala, Mr. Michael Idakwo, reportedly arrived at the scene and ordered that the victims' families should take them away for burial.

A resident said, "We don't know who to cry to now that the police, who are supposed to protect us, have turned against us. We don't know any human rights organisation to turn to. Please help us; we are helpless."

The Police Public Relations Officer, Kogi State Command, William Aya, confirmed the incident, adding that the state Commissioner of Police had gone to visit the scene.

He said, "I don't have all the details of what transpired now. But the state Commissioner of Police has gone to see what actually transpired and assuage the residents. I will get back when I finally get the details."

He had, however, yet to call back as of press time.

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