

One dies as hunters, police clash in Oyo

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Olufemi Atoyebi, Ibadan

Confusion enveloped the residents of the Akanran area of Ibadan as one person was killed on Tuesday as members of a Yoruba professional hunters group, who claimed to be members of Agbekoya, and policemen clashed.

Schools were quickly closed as the clash escalated while pupils and teachers took cover under chairs and desks.

An eyewitness said members of the 'Agbekoya' group were returning to Ibadan from Lagos around 10.30am when they were stopped by policemen attached to the Ogbere Onilanta Police Station in the Ona Ara Local Government Area of Oyo State.

The exchange of hot words between the hunters and the policemen soon degenerated to a gunfight, leading to the shooting of an Agbekoya member, who later died as a result of injuries he sustained in the shootout.

"The hunters were going for a meeting when they were stopped by the policemen for reckless driving. One of them came down and assaulted a policeman, which resulted in an argument. Suddenly, there were shootings and after a while, one of the hunters fell and was arrested while others fled the scene, leaving behind one of the cars they came with," said the eyewitness, who refused to give his name.

When contacted, the National Publicity Secretary of the Agbekoya Farmers Association, Chief Olatunji Bamidele, said the group was impersonating the real Agbekoya group and that complaints had been lodged with the police about the existence of the impersonating group.

He said, "These are fake people who are not registered as our members. We have been fighting this trend for a long time and we have reported the existence of such groups like Agbekoya Solidarity Movement and Reformed Agbekoya Group to the police.

"They claim to be sympathisers of the late Agbekoya leader, Tafa Adeoye, but they are fraudsters. They use the platform to cause mayhem. The real group is Agbekoya Farmers Association of Nigeria, which is duly registered."

The Police Public Relations Officer of the Oyo State Command, Adekunle Ajisebutu, said those who confronted the policemen were suspected armed robbers.

He said, "Some suspected armed robbers, later identified as Agbekoya militants, in three vehicles, attacked policemen on stop-and-search mission at Ogbere and attempted to snatch a rifle from the police.

"The armed bandits were repelled. The hoodlums fled only to regroup and launched a deadly attack on the Ogbere Police Station, advancing to the armoury, while shooting their way in. The police again repelled their attack and in the process, one of the hoodlums was fatally injured."

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