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Osun declares curfew as 10 die in Ife communal clash

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No fewer than 10 persons were said to have been killed, while 30 others were injured following a clash between some Hausa and Yoruba youths in Ile Ife, Osun State, on Wednesday.

Vehicles were burnt and vandalised by the rampaging youths, while some houses and shops were set ablaze in the clash which forced some persons to flee their areas.



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Our correspondent gathered at the scene that the fight was caused by a Hausa man, who allegedly slapped a Yoruba woman believed to be a wife of a Yoruba driver on Tuesday.

It was gathered that the Hausa man had littered the surroundings of the woman's shop with papers and she complained against it, which resulted in an altercation.

The woman's husband was said to have taken some of his colleagues to the scene of the fight and they reportedly beat up the man and some of his colleagues there.

This was said to have infuriated some Hausa youths, who reportedly mobilised themselves and launched an attack on some Yoruba persons at the Sabo area on Wednesday.

They were said to have injured some traders, which made the traders and some drivers to also mobilise against Hausa people their attackers.

There was tension in Ile Ife when our correspondent visited the town. An Armoured Personnel Carrier and a police van were parked at the Mayfair Roundabout while most commercial buses refused to take commuters into the area.

A bank worker told our correspondent on the telephone that all banks in the area asked their customers to leave the banking halls, while their gates were shut to prevent hoodlums from using the opportunity of the clash to loot.

Some Yoruba traders, who spoke with our correspondent in the Sabo area, claimed that Hausa leaders alerted security agencies when the crisis broke out.



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property belonging to Yoruba traders.

Two Hausa men, who identified themselves simply as Ibrahim and Nuhu, told our correspondent that Yoruba youths looted and burnt shops belonging Hausa traders in Sabo during the crisis.

Ibrahim said, “They stole our goods and burnt our shops. We don’t know what will happen tonight if this can happen in the day.”

Our correspondent saw smokes billowing from some buildings, while some people were seen running away from the area. They claimed that some Hausa youths were shooting arrows from inside some buildings.

Some Yoruba youths were later seen with guns going towards the epicentre of the crisis, threatening to kill those who “wasted the lives of our kinsmen.”

Parents were seen rushing to various schools to pick their children, claiming that Hausa youths were attacking pupils in some schools.

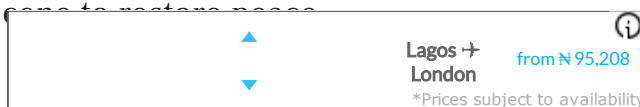
Some pupils were said to have been taken to the Ooni’s Palace from where their parents went to take them.

Majority of the students taken to the Ooni’s Palace were said to have been rescued from Central Elementary School, Ilare, which is opposite the area where the fight broke out.

A source at the Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital told our correspondent that some of the corpses were taken to the hospital’s mortuary and some of the injured persons were treated there.

The state Police Public Relations Officer, Mrs. Folashade Odoro, did not return calls to her telephone to confirm the incident.

However, the Public Relations Officer of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, Mr. Babawale Afolabi, told our correspondent that men from the command and other security personnel were at the scene to restore peace.



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The Ooni of Ife, Oba Adeyeye Ogunwusi, was said to have sent some emissaries to the crisis area.

The media aide to the monarch, Moses Olafare, said, “*Kabiyesi* was informed about the crisis on Tuesday and he sent some chiefs to address the situation. The misunderstanding was resolved and everybody thought there was no more war.

“But on Wednesday, we heard that they had started fighting again. Kabiyesi contacted the police, the Department of State Services and other security agencies and they responded swiftly.

“ But before the security agents arrived at the place, some persons had started burning down houses and vehicles. Some Hausa persons were rounded up and taken hostage.

“The Ooni of Ife sent some chiefs to rescue those held hostage. I was in the delegation and we rescued over 1,000 Hausa people and handed them over to the Seriki Hausa. This effort doused the tension. Calm has returned to the troubled zone.”

Our correspondent observed at Moro town that an army officer, some armed soldiers and other security operatives were heading towards Ile Ife around 4pm.

Meanwhile, the Osun State Government has imposed a curfew from 6pm to 7am on Ile Ife in order to prevent hoodlums from using the cover of darkness to unleash fresh mayhem on innocent people.

The curfew was announced on the Osun State Broadcasting Corporation Television.

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