

# Three feared dead as Alamiyeseigha's kinsmen, security operatives clash

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**NIGER DELTA UNIVERSITY**

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Three persons are feared killed and many injured following a clash between security operatives and kinsmen of the late former Governor Diepreye Alamiyeiseigha in Amassoma, Southern Ijaw, Bayelsa State.

The clash, which reportedly started on Tuesday morning at the gate of the state-owned Niger Delta University, Amassoma, threw the university community into pandemonium as sporadic gunshots and fired teargas canisters caused panic among the residents.

The clash was said to have started when a detachment of armed security operatives, who arrived in the community early in the morning, forcefully opened the shut gate of the troubled NDU.

The university was closed down by some angry community women, whose names were removed from the institution's payroll after they were indicted by the ongoing public sector reforms of Governor Seriake Dickson.

The casket-bearing protesters had carried a mock coffin of Dickson during the demonstration which locked down Amassoma.

The women, who insisted that their names must be returned to the payroll, were said to have hired the services of a welder to permanently shut the university's gate.

In a bid to find an amicable resolution to the crisis, the government recently dispatched a team of negotiators led by the Chief of Staff, Talford Ongolo and the Commissioner for Education to meet with the protesters and the host community.

It was learnt that among the resolutions of the meeting were agreements that the university should review the fate of the sacked workers and suspend the protest to allow academic activities resume in the university.

In spite of the agreement, the host community continued with its protest, refusing to open the NDU gate.

It was learnt that the protesters including women and youths were angry when they discovered that the school's gate had been forcefully opened and surrounded by scores of heavily armed security personnel.

They were said to have regrouped in their numbers and marched towards the gate to confront the security men.

A community source, who craved anonymity, claimed that the security operatives comprising the police, soldiers and men of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps were overwhelmed by the crowd rushing towards them.

He said, “They first retreated onto the premises of the university and called for reinforcement. Later they started throwing teargas canisters and shooting at the protesters.

“Many were injured and about three persons were shot. They were feared dead but were immediately rushed to the hospital”.

A lecturer from the university, who did not want his name mentioned, said Armoured Personnel Carriers were deployed to reinforce security at the troubled community.

“Some persons have been shot by security operatives following a protest by women and some youths on the forceful reopening of the NDU school gate,” he said.

Meanwhile, the Bayelsa State Government has condemned the violence and attack on the state-owned NDU by persons it described as hoodlums on Tuesday.

In a statement on Tuesday, the Special Adviser to the Governor on Media Relations, Mr. Fidelis Soriwei, blamed opposition political leaders for the mobilisation of the hoodlums who barricaded the gate and disrupted academic activities in the institution last week to protest the retirement of some overage and redundant personnel.

Soriwei said that the unscrupulous politicians were taking advantage of the ignorance of young people and hoodlums to sustain a protest against the decision of the governing council and management of the NDU.

The governor’s aide accused the opposition politicians of mobilising and arming the hoodlums to disrupt academic activities of the institution by forcibly disrupting the university activities for close to two weeks.

He said that it was rather unfortunate that unpatriotic elements would launch sustained attacks on the university even when negotiations on the retired over-age and redundant personnel had been concluded and an agreement reached with the host communities on the matter.

Soriwei said that the government had been patient on the activities of the hoodlums who blocked and mounted canopies on major roads in and outside Amassoma.

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