

One killed as soldiers, protesting youths clash in Rivers

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A group of soldiers on Monday shot and killed one Aleruchi Woko during a protest against flooding by youths of Nkpolu community in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

A policeman, whose identity could not be immediately ascertained, was seriously injured by the angry youths, while four other protesters were said to have sustained gunshot injuries.

Our correspondent learnt that the policeman, who had come to restore peace, allegedly lost his rifle during the clash.

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It was gathered that the deceased died on the spot after being hit by bullet from one of the soldiers.

The incident caused a gridlock on the Choba-Rumuokoro axis of the East-West Road, leaving many commuters stranded for several hours, as the angry youths blocked the Nkpolu end of the road.

Further angered by the killing of their kinsman, the youth burnt down a fast food joint along the road and vandalised some vehicles.

The youth had come out in large numbers to express their dissatisfaction with the alleged neglect by government at all levels since flood began to ravage their community.

A source, who witnessed the incident, Bernard, said the protest was ongoing when military men came with their vehicle and began to remove the barricade used to block the road.

He explained that the soldiers began to shoot when the protesting youths refused to leave the road, adding that one of them was felled by the soldiers' bullet.

Bernard said, "Today, the community asked everybody to come out for a peaceful protest to see how we can draw the attention of government to the situation. We spent some time before the local government chairman came.

"He (chairman) was addressing us when we heard gunshots. A military vehicle got to the protesting youths and the soldiers tried to open the road by force, but the youth did not leave the road. The next thing they did was to open fire. It is indeed painful."

Narrating the incident, the elder brother to the deceased, Collins Woko, stated that the first military van left when the occupants confirmed that the protest was a peaceful one.