

Mechanic dies in Rivers police cell, colleagues protest

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Commissioner of Police, Rivers State, Mustapha Dandaura

Sampson Itode, Port Harcourt

FOLLOWING the death of a mechanic, Chima Ikwunado, in a police cell, his colleagues and spare parts dealers on Monday locked their shops and staged a peaceful protest to demand justice.

The protest, which was planned by the mechanics to begin at the Ikokwu Mechanic Village, Mile Two, Port Harcourt, and end at the Government House, was aborted as the protesters were dispersed by officials of the Rivers State Police Command.

An eyewitness, who spoke with The PUNCH, said the protest started around 10am and was stopped by the police.

The source explained that gunshots were fired into the air by the policemen to disperse the angry protesters, adding that passersby were later made to raise their hands as a sign of surrender before they could pass through the area hours after the incident.

“Today, around 10 o’clock in the morning, some Ikokwu mechanics and spare parts sellers mobilised themselves and marched to the Government House in order to tell the governor about the injustice they were facing in the hands of security men and the torture and killing of their colleague.

“But the police came with their vans and stopped their protest. The police fired some gunshots into the air to disperse the protesters and arrest some of them who refused to go back. That is why everyone passing here till now is made to raise their hands before they could pass on foot,” the eyewitness, who pleaded anonymity, said.

When contacted, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Nnamdi Omoni, said the protest was ill-conceived.

He added that the police had to stop the protest because hoodlums in the area joined them and were destroying property and burning tyres on the road.

“We were surprised at the protest this morning by Ikokwu spare parts dealers and mechanics because there was no reference to us before embarking on that protest march. Also, when we got wind of it, we mobilised our men to contain it.

“Before we even got there, some hoodlums had infiltrated them and were destroying property, but we were able to contain and disperse them,” he added.

Omoni noted that the police were doing everything within their power to unravel the circumstances that led to the death of the victim, following the order of the Rivers

State Police Commissioner, Mustapha Dandaura.

“Protest shouldn’t be an option in the circumstance because the Commissioner of Police has already ordered an investigation into the matter and trusting the credibility of the officers handling the case, justice will be served.

“We are doing our best in the case; men of the State Criminal Investigation Department, headed by DCP Ahmed Kantagora, are putting all efforts to unravel the circumstances that led to the death of the young man,” the police spokesman said.

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