

Traders flee as soldier allegedly kills 45-year-old man in Imo

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There was tension on Wednesday in Assa community, in the Ohaji/Egbema Local Government Area of Imo State after a soldier allegedly shot and killed a 45-year-old petty trader, identified only as Chinedu.

The incident, which happened at Afor Assa Market, led to pandemonium, as villagers ran helter-skelter for fear of being hit by stray bullets.

According to a village source, trouble started when some youths intercepted a truck loaded with locally-refined crude oil that was allegedly being accompanied to an unknown location by soldiers on a special duty in the community.

According to the source, the youth demanded that the owners of the consignment give them money before they continued the trip.

The soldiers were reported to have prevented the truck owners from acceding to the demand of the youth.

The source said in order to scare the youth, who gathered around the truck, the military men fired shots into the air.

However, a bullet hit the victim and he died on the spot.

“On seeing the dead body of the man, the soldiers ran away with the truck driver, leaving the truck behind.

“However, the youth set the truck with its content ablaze. The dead body is yet to be deposited in a mortuary.

“At present, the road is deserted. People have confined themselves to their houses for fear of the unknown,” another witness said.

The traditional ruler of Assa autonomous community, Eze Emmanuel Assor, told *PUNCH Metro* that the community was talking to the military hierarchy over the incident.

“We want to make sure that such a thing does not happen again and there is lasting peace,” he added.

The President General of the community, Mr Bartholomew Obodo, said he had met with the garrison commander and efforts were on to ensure that the culprits were arrested.

When contacted, the Army Public Relations Officer of the 34 Artillery Brigade Command, Obinze, Owerri, Babatunde Zubairu, said he was not aware of the incident.

The state Police Public Relations Officer, Orlando Ikeokwu, who confirmed the killing of the 45-year-old, told our correspondent that the soldiers were not accompanying the persons carrying the crude oil.

He explained that the officers arrested the owners of the crude oil and were taking them to the military base in the community when the youth intercepted them.

Ikeokwu said it was in a bid to ward off the violent youths that the military men shot “consistently in the air, but unfortunately, a bullet hit the victim and he died.”

He said the state Commissioner of Police, Nasiru Muhammed, had ordered an investigation into the incident.