

Osun mosque attack: Worshippers attempted unmasking our masquerader, says custodian, govt vows sanctions

Bola Bamigbola 29 June 2021

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Scene of the clash

The leadership of the Kamorudeen Society of Nigeria and adherents of the Esubiyi masquerader, on Monday, traded accusations over a clash at the Oluode Aranyin's compound, Osogbo, which left one man dead and 19 others injured, even as a Muslim group gave the Osun State Government 72 hours to arrest the perpetrators.

The deceased, Moshood Salawudeen, from Baale's compound, Iwo, was said to be the Baba Ijo of the Kamorudeen Society of Nigeria.

He was said to have been shot in the head in front of the mosque on Sunday during the clash and died on the spot.

Many residents of the area declined to comment on the incident, but one of them, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said when he heard the noise and rushed to the scene, the followers of the Esubiyi masquerader were initially chased back, but returned with more men.

"It was a free-for-all between the two groups. They have a history of clashes that predates now. I was inside when I heard the noise and rushed out. The followers of the masquerader were standing a few meters away from the mosque after they had been chased back by members of the Islamic group. They later mobilised and returned with more men."

But while narrating what transpired at a press briefing, the Chief Imam of the society, Qosim Yunus, admitted that the group had a frosty relationship with

the followers of the Esubiyi masquerader, which resulted in litigation in the past.

Yunus said the group was having a special prayer for the country under a canopy in front of the mosque on Sunday, adding that the event had progressed without any hitch until the Esubiyi masquerader and his followers got to the area.

He said, "Almost three hours into the prayer, commotion enveloped the hitherto peaceful environment of the mosque. Alas, members of the society, who were praying for peace, ended up as casualties as the masquerader's adherents, led by an Ifa worshipper, who is also an APC stalwart in Osun State, stormed the mosque and unleashed mayhem on the Islamic faithful, leaving one person dead and scores with gun wounds; the mosque was vandalised and vehicles and other properties of the society destroyed.

"The remains of the deceased, Alhaji Moshood Salawudeen, have been deposited in the morgue of the UNIOSUN Teaching Hospital, Osogbo, and the injured are presently receiving treatment at the same hospital.

"The masquerader was led to our area by four policemen and they initially passed without any quarrel. They later came to where we sat and attacked us. The deceased was shot dead; our people were attacked with machetes.

"The following are some of our members, who were injured: Abdul Jelleel, Adebayo Awolesin, Taofeek Fatai, Malik Abdulkabir, Quazeek Al-ameen, Qauzeem Aseyori, Ayuba Abdakeem, Abdusalam Abdrauf, Ajabge Ishaq, Owolabi Maruf, Risiqat Zakariyahu, Isiaq Ibraheem, Yahaya and Halimot Oladosu."

But while reacting to the allegations, the custodian of the Esubiyi masquerader, Fashola Esuleke, accused the Muslim group of masterminding an attack on the masquerader during a visit to the area.

Fashola, who said his father, Chief Kayode Esuleke, owns the masquerader, alleged that members of the Islamic group attempted to unmask the masquerader during the attack, adding that the police and men of the Agbekoya group later intervened and rescued some of the adherents, who were held hostage by members of the Kamorudeen Society.

He said the masquerader was in the area to greet a family member and after he had prayed for the man and left his house, the procession came under attack as a member of the Islamic group attempted to remove the veil on the masquerader.

Denying killing or causing bodily harm to anyone during the clash, Fashola said the leader of the Islamic group had a history of attacking masqueraders and burning their regalia, adding that five followers of the Esubiyi masquerader were injured.

He stated, "We were in the area to greet a family member and we had moved to the house of the said man, passing by members of the Kamorudeen Society, who sat under the canopy in front of their mosque. We didn't beat drums or make a noise. But when we were returning, our procession came under attack.

"Some members of the Islamic group went to the upper part of the mosque and started pelting us with stones. One of them charged forward and attempted to remove the veil covering the face of our masquerader.

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"But some of our men rescued the masquerader. Five of our members were also injured. Before we got to the area, we passed through many mosques and churches. Nothing like that happened. The man should be investigated."

Speaking on behalf of a group, the Coalition of Muslim Rights Activists of Nigeria, Osun State chapter, Mallam Abdulganiy Sahid, gave the state government a 72-hour ultimatum to arrest all those identified as the perpetrators.

Sahid said failure to do so, members of the group would demonstrate their capacity to defend themselves within the ambit of the law.

He also asked the government to take over the treatment of the injured and repair of damaged properties.

Meanwhile, the state police command has said some people have been arrested in connection with the clash.

The command's spokesperson, Yemisi Opalola, told our correspondent, "Some people have been arrested in connection with the incident. Investigation is on already. One person was killed, but his identity is not known."

She, however, declined disclosing the number of people in custody over the incident.

Similarly, the state government said the perpetrators would be brought to justice.

It also called on residents of the state, especially religious and ethnic groups, to coexist peacefully in order to maintain the peaceful profile of Osun State.

The call was made by the Deputy Chief of Staff to the Governor, Prince Abdullah Binuyo, who led the state government's delegation on an on-the-spot assessment of the scene as well as paid a visit to the victims receiving treatment at the UNIOSUN Teaching Hospital.

Binuyo was quoted in a statement by the Commissioner for Information and Civic Orientation, Funke Egbemode, to have said that the government would investigate what happened between the two groups.

The statement read in part, "For us as a government, one of the cardinal things we preach to our citizens irrespective of their religious leaning is the need to coexist peacefully and ensure that the rights of their neighbours are not infringed upon in any way.

"We've been to the hospital to visit the casualties arising from yesterday's attack and we are appealing for calm on both sides to avoid any case of reprisal from any quarter.

"This is a major issue that the government will step into, investigate what actually happened and bring to justice those responsible for this very unfortunate act."

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