

FCT: Police begins probe as mob kills, sets ablaze vigilante for alleged blasphemy

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A mob on Saturday killed a member of a vigilance group for allegedly making a blasphemous statement. The mob also reportedly set the body ablaze.

* This happened less than a month after a student of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto, Deborah Samuel, was accused of blasphemy and was killed and set ablaze by a mob on the school campus.

It was gathered that members of the vigilance group guarding the Timber shed market at the Federal Housing Estate in Abuja had wanted to arrest some residents who were wandering around the market in the early hours of Saturday.

The residents were said to have begged the vigilance group to set them free in the name of Allah, but one of the vigilantes refused and reportedly made a blasphemous comment.

A trader in the market who spoke to our correspondent in confidence said the deceased was also a Muslim.

He said, "Petty thieves used to disturb us in this market and some thugs used to fight here but since they (vigilantes) came, nothing of such has ever happened. One of the vigilance officers patrolling the market sighted some persons in the market and he and his colleagues wanted to arrest them. They told them they were not a stranger in the market and the area.

"The vigilantes insisted they were going to arrest them. Those persons had no option but to beg them in the name of Allah but one of the vigilante members spoke in a harsh tone and rendered a blasphemous statement to explain that nothing can make them not arrest those guys and take them to the vigilantes' office. That vigilante was also a Muslim from what we heard."

The trader explained that the vigilance group members tried to hide their colleague who was accused of making a blasphemous statement but was overpowered by the angry mob.

Meanwhile, the spokesperson for the Federal Capital Territory Police Command, Josephine Adeh, told Sunday PUNCH that normalcy had been restored to the area, adding that monitoring and surveillance of the area would continue.

Adeh added, "Residents are however urged to go about their lawful duties without fear or apprehension of any kind from any quarters as discrete investigation continues, to unravel facts surrounding the ugly incident and to arrest the perpetrators.

"Upon the receipt of this information, a quick intervention team comprising the Surveillance and Ambush team of the Command attached to the Lugbe Divisional Police Headquarters was drafted to the scene where the victim was rescued after suffering severe degrees of burns and taken immediately to the hospital where he was confirmed dead by a doctor on call."