

Buhari, Sanwo-Olu, others mourn as hoodlums kill guard, burn shops

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By Naomi Chima

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A 65-year-old security guard was shot dead by hoodlums whom traders accused of setting their shops ablaze at the spare parts market in Kirikiri, Olodi-Apapa, in the Ajegunle area of Lagos State.

During a visit to the market, the traders, who were seen wailing over their goods that got burnt by the fire, alleged that the hoodlums invaded the market in the early hours of Wednesday.

The traders, while lamenting over the incident, alleged that masked hoodlums, numbering six, were resisted by security men from setting the market ablaze last Thursday, adding that the same hoodlums, in a desperate attempt to burn the market, returned, shot the security guard and set the market ablaze.

Speaking with our correspondent, one of the traders, Okwuchukwu Maduka, said traders lost goods worth millions of naira, adding that the development had thrown him and other traders into confusion.

He said, “Look at what some people have done to us after labouring for so many years. They shot the security man that questioned them; they stood and waited for the fire to spread through before they left.

“How am I going to start my life again? The government should know what to do. If nothing is done, these people will destroy more markets. Let the government not fold their hands, let them come here and see what is happening because we are not happy. I have lost over N20m goods.”

Another trader, who gave his name only as Collins, said the goods in the shop he had been using to fend for himself after the boss he served settled him two years ago got burnt.

“All that I laboured for has become scrap. I lost goods worth N3m. I sold the scraps to *aboki* for N1,500. When the firefighters came, they didn’t have enough water, so they left and returned later with water/gas but everything was gone by then,” Collins said.

Another trader, identified simply as Kelechi, said he got to know that shops in the market were on fire around 4am.

He said, “I was called around 4am that my shop was on fire and I ran to the market and saw my shop on fire. The men that set the market ablaze were six in number.

“They wore black suits, covered their faces with hoods and carried guns. For more than 22 years, I have sold all kinds of car spare parts in this market, but everything got burnt to ashes.

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“I didn’t even pick out a pin; I am starting my life from the scratch. Those people that have done this think we will become slaves but God is watching.”

Reacting, the Director, Lagos State Fire and Rescue Service, Adeseye Margaret, in a statement, said the fire started around 3.28am, adding that the Ajegunle Fire Station was deployed to the scene.

“Upon arrival, it was discovered that rows of shops that traded in auto spare parts were well on fire and that led to Sari-Iganmu and Ilupeju Fire crews of the agency joining up to subdue the raging fire and salvage a nearby filling station.

“However, a male adult was recovered by the Tolu Police Division of the Nigerian Police around the scene while the Lagos Neighborhood and Safety Corps and the Red Cross were also in attendance,” he said.

Contacted, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Benjamin Hundeyin, confirmed that the security guard was shot dead.

He said, “A 65-year-old security guard in the market was shot dead. We have identified him and his corpse has been taken to the mortuary. An investigation is ongoing.”

Meanwhile, the President, Major-General Muhammadu Buhari (retd), in a statement by the Senior Special Assistant to the President (Media and Publicity), Garba Shehu, commiserated with the family of a deceased guard and traders who lost millions of naira goods in the fire.

“President Muhammadu Buhari has learned with deep sadness the death of a 65-year-old security guard, the loss of personal property and means of livelihood of some hardworking Nigerians at the Akere spare parts market in the Apapa Ajegunle area of Lagos State.”

Also reacting, the state Governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, while commiserating with the traders, expressed shock over the incident.

The governorship candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party, Abdulazeez Adediran, and that of the Labour Party, Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour, also commiserated with the traders.