

Power-drunk soldiers shoot two

Amarachi Okeh

THE families of two persons, Oyegewu Afoso and David Agbagie, have been thrown into mourning after soldiers allegedly shot them to death in the Afokpella community, in the Etsako East Local Government Area of Edo State.

PUNCH Metro gathered that members of the community embarked on a peaceful protest to express their grievances against underemployment by the two cement factories operating in the community.

During the demonstration which started around 6am on Monday, the protesters were said to be chanting solidarity songs as they complained that the portion of indigenes of the community in the employment of the cement factories were casual workers who lose a certain percentage of their salaries to traditional rulers in



•Afoso

neighbouring communities. The demonstration, however, took another turn when



•Agbagie

protesters compelled members of neighbouring communities to join them in the protest and

prevented them from going to the cement factories to work.

Angered by the development, our correspondent gathered that members of one of the neighbouring communities, who were bent on going to work, allegedly mobilised soldiers, men of the Nigerian Police Force, and other security officials to disperse the unarmed protesters.

On getting to the scene, the armed security operatives, in a bid to disperse the protesters in the Afokpella community, reportedly started shooting.

While some of the protesters escaped unhurt, some other protesters who were unlucky, while scampering to safety, sustained varying degrees of bullet injuries.

Lamenting over the development, one of the protesters, who gave his name simply as Michael, said no fewer than three persons

youths dead in Edo community

sustained bullet injuries while being dispersed at the protest ground.

He explained that the protest was in the general interest of the community, adding that aggrieved members of the community, who were pained by the attack against them despite protesting peacefully, vandalised a vehicle belonging to one of the cement factories.

Michael said, "We were carrying on a peaceful protest and we also invited neighbouring communities to join the Afokpella community in the protest. They were participating at first but later withdrew after a short time.

"Suddenly, people from one of the neighbouring communities came with some youths to disrupt the protest and shot three of our boys. So, we quickly stopped the protest. We later heard that some (Afokpella) youth heard what

happened, saw a coaster bus belonging to one of the cement factories that was passing, broke the glass of the vehicle and destroyed it.

"Before we knew it, the soldiers came in three vans to the Afokpella community and started shooting. While some people ran, some youths in the community were courageous enough to explain to the soldiers that members of one of the neighbouring communities attacked them while they were protesting peacefully."

Michael explained that a shouting match ensued, and the soldiers continued shooting sporadically.

"A lot of people sustained injuries and my cousin, Agbagie, was killed. The soldiers wrote down the names of people who participated in the protest and said they will look for us and kill all of us. We have been living in fear," Michael said.

PUNCH Metro gathered that the soldiers, while being led by an indigene in one of the communities to fish out those involved in the protest that led to the vandalism of the vehicle belonging to one of the cement factories in the community, reportedly shot an innocent man to death.

One of the protesters, who gave his name simply as Abanako, said the innocent man was his brother, Afoso, adding that he never participated in the protest.

Abanako, while demanding justice for his slain brother, said before embarking on the protest, the security agents including the soldiers and police were officially notified.

He said, "My brother (Afoso) was not there when the protest was going on; when we staged a protest in the community last two months, the police and soldiers that came said we didn't inform them before embarking on the protest. They said we should put it in writing if we want to protest and we notified them about this protest and even gave them the date of the protest.

"They agreed for us to do the protest. When we were doing

the protest, we stopped those from other communities that wanted to go to work. Later, they mobilised soldiers, police, and NSCDC officials with guns and they started shooting at us. They shot many of our people and some of us ran away.

"Later, the soldiers returned and started shooting people again. We don't know why because, at that point, we had already stopped the protest. And that was how they shot my brother who didn't participate in the protest. We could not take him to the hospital because soldiers were everywhere, they (soldiers) threatened to shoot anybody they see outside, and that was when my brother died at home."

Abanako, who also confirmed that the soldiers allegedly killed Agbagie, said they took his corpse and also whisked away a member of the community identified simply as Imofin, adding that Imofin's whereabouts had been unknown since Monday.

Afoso's bereaved cousin, who gave her name simply as Natasha, said until his death, he was a casual worker at the two cement factories in the community.

"Before he died he said 'Someone pointed at me and the soldiers shot me'. He died at home. My cousin was a jovial person that is easy going. He enjoys life and does not deserve that kind of death. We want justice," Natasha said.

Efforts to reach the Director, Army Public Relations, Onyema Nwachukwu, failed as he did not pick up his calls and had yet to reply to the text message sent to his mobile number was yet to be responded to as of press time.

The state Police Public Relations Officer, SP Chidi Nwabuzor, when contacted on Wednesday for a reaction regarding the events that led to the death of the victims, said he had not been briefed about the incident.

He, however, promised to investigate and revert to our correspondent but had yet to do so as of the time this report was filed.

tes kill Anambra tricycle operator, dump

station.

Speaking on condition of anonymity for security reasons, the neighbour said when Onah's whereabouts remained unknown for some days, the owner of the tricycle he was using for commercial purposes on hire purchase engaged the services of a security tracker and it led to the arrest of a man in possession of the missing tricycle.

The neighbour said, "On further interrogations, the man confessed to buying the tricycle from the Ojoto Community Vigilance Group and took the police operatives to the place.

"When the police arrested the vigilante official that sold the tricycle to him, he subsequently mentioned the vigilante commander as the one who masterminded the abduction and subsequent killing of Onah. He said they threw his corpse in a river in the Mmili John Ojoto community."

Onah's father, Emmanuel, who had been grieving over the death of his son, demanded



•Onah

justice, adding that the suspects linked to the crime had refused to disclose the whereabouts of his son's corpse.

While calling for a thorough investigation into the matter, the deceased's father urged police authorities to fish out all those involved in his son's death.

Contacted for a reaction on the development, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Ikenga Tochukwu, said he had

not been briefed about the incident.

Ikenga promised to reach out to the police division concerned for a proper update but had yet to get back to our correspondent as of the time this report was filed.

However, a senior police officer from the Ogidi Division who pleaded anonymity because he was not authorised to speak on the matter, said the commander of the vigilance

group and other suspects were arrested on Wednesday.

He added that the Ojoto

Hoodlums steal

Toni Ufah

A businesswoman, Linda Aekwulomu, has been traumatised after burglars looted her goods after breaking into her shop at Cele Bus Stop, along the Apapa Oshodi Expressway in Lagos State.

The businesswoman, while lamenting over the development, said she lost goods worth N3m to the burglars, adding that this was the third time burglars would break into her shop and cart away her goods.

Speaking with our correspondent, Aekwulomu said goods including iPhones, computers, and other products were stolen from her shop, adding that louts in the area where her shop is located were responsible for her ordeal.

She said, "My shop here at the plaza has been burgled over

corpse in river

community leaders and stakeholders were interested in the matter, adding that the

police had intensified efforts to arrest other suspects linked to the crime.

N1.3m goods from Lagos bizwoman's shop

three times by burglars and I have lost a lot of my phones which are for sale to them. But this particular one is something that I cannot stomach again. I just bought phones and other gadgets worth over N3m and look at what I am facing again, robbers have entered my shop again and carted away my market. The case was reported at the Okota Police Station."

A trader, Nnadi Oluchukwu, whose shop is located opposite Ekwulomu's shop, confirmed that his neighbour's shop had been burgled on three separate occasions.

He said, "In this area, there are many people who just walk around looking for what to steal. We even have people that they call 'Bolas' in the area that steal when they see the opportunity to do it. They broke into that lady's shop



•The burgled shop

and stole phones which I knew that they would sell for cheap prices.

"Another thing is that when you look at this area, there are too many louts around and they are all a security risk. How would one be able to protect his or her property when the louts are much? That's the problem that we are facing here. You would see people who don't have anywhere to go but to

hang around these premises. Why will such an incident not occur?"

The owner of the plaza where the theft happened, Olumuyiwa Jejeloye, told our correspondent he had been against having people with no purposeful intent at the plaza.

He said, "I have at many times had to pursue many of these boys who, under the guise of working for some transport company, indulge in crimes. They would smoke hard drugs and I know that these transport companies are not their employers."

Contacted, the spokesperson for the Lagos State Police Command, SP Benjamin Hundeyin, told our correspondent that he had not been briefed, adding that he would revert when he gets the details of the matter.