

One killed, others injured in operatives, Anambra youths' clash

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There was pandemonium along the Onitsha-Owerri Road by Obodoukwu Junction, Onitsha, Anambra State, on Thursday, when a stray bullet from some gun-wielding men wearing black jackets suspected to be operatives of the Anambra State Anti-touts Agency killed a young man.

It was gathered that the victim identified as Chimezie from Achina, Aguata Local Government Area of the state, was standing at the balcony of his residence by Shoe Site, near Okpoko Police Station, in Ogbaru Local Government Area, when the stray bullet hit him.

He was said to have just completed his National Youth Service Corps.

The irate youths, who marched from the Metallurgical Training Institute, located along the Onitsha-Owerri Road to the Amanato area of the road towards Upper Iweka flyover, made bonfires on both lanes of the road, a situation that hampered free flow of movement.

Sources told *PUNCH Metro* that the anti-tout operatives who invaded the area in a bid to stop the protesting youths opened fire and started shooting sporadically in an effort to scare the protesters.

The source said, "The youths were protesting incessant arrests, intimidation and harassment of youths in the area by the anti-tout squad, agents of the state government, wearing different kinds uniforms and acting as revenue agents at the same time.

"They always extort tricycle operators while claiming to be working for the state government. They collect between N300 and N500 per trip in the name of collecting revenue for the state government.

"It was during the protest that the operatives emerged from nowhere and started shooting sporadically in the air apparently to scare the protesters away, but in the process, the residents and traders whose movements for their commercial and business activities was at its peak, started running for their safety, with some sustaining injuries in the process. In the process, a bullet hit a young man standing at his balcony."

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Another source, a trader, who identified himself as Ozoemenam, said, "It was in the process of the sporadic shooting in the air that the deceased victim, who was discussing in the balcony of their flat, sustained gunshot injuries apparently from a stray bullet and died instantly."

It was gathered that officers from Okpoko Police Station were invited to evacuate the corpse of the deceased and deposited the remains at the mortuary.

A senior police officer from the station, who spoke on condition of anonymity, confirmed the death of the victim and the evacuation of his corpse at the morgue.

The officer said that the youths were protesting their incessant arrest, detention and intimidation around Owerri Road, Obodoukwu Road and Ezeiweka areas and its environs.

“The youths in the area were protesting the midnight arrest, between 2: 30 and 3:30 am by the anti-tout operatives, and this morning they came back and opened fire on them and in the process the victim was killed.

“You know that these anti-tout squad members were not trained in handling arms, so they must have shot unprofessionally before the bullet hit that young man.”

Efforts to speak with the state Police Public Relations Officer, Ikenga Tochukwu, proved abortive as he did not respond to the messages and calls to his telephone line as of the time of filing this report.