

UST IN: Tension in Kaduna as security operatives kill youth

11th August 2025



Protesters at the Barnawa area of Kaduna on Monday. Credit: Godwin Isenyo

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There is palpable tension in the Barnawa Axis of Kaduna South Local Government Area on Monday, following the killing of a young man by security operatives.

The incident triggered angry protests and the closure of popular social spots in the neighbourhood.

Details of the incident were still sketchy as of press time, but eyewitnesses told PUNCH Online that the youth was reportedly shot by a personnel of the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency, who was in pursuit of a suspected drug dealer.

According to eyewitnesses, the fatal shooting occurred near one of the busy junctions in Barnawa (market), a densely populated area known for its vibrant nightlife.

One of the witnesses, who simply gave his name as Musa, said the NDLEA operatives had stormed the area in an unmarked vehicle and were chasing a young man suspected of being in possession of narcotics when the tragedy happened.

“We were all here when the NDLEA men chased somebody. They were shouting at him to stop. Then one of them fired a shot, and it hit a completely different person who was just passing by.

“That boy had nothing to do with the matter. He was innocent,” Musa said.

The identity of the victim had not been officially released, but residents described him as a “quiet and hardworking young man” who lived within the Barnawa neighbourhood.

In the aftermath of the shooting, angry youths from the community trooped out in large numbers, barricading the major road leading into Barnawa from the Aliyu Makama.

They burned tyres, chanted slogans and vowed not to leave until justice was served.

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Another protester, who identified herself as Aisha, said the shooting was “one killing too many” in the community.

“We are tired of security agents killing our brothers and sisters over nothing. They always say they are chasing criminals, but innocent people end up dying.

“We want the government to take action. This must not be swept under the carpet,” she fumed.

The protest, which began around 6 p.m., disrupted vehicular movement and forced many business owners to hurriedly shut their shops for fear of escalation.

Popular entertainment spots, bars, and eateries in the Barnawa area also closed their doors, leaving the usually bustling streets unusually quiet.

A commercial tricycle operator, Bello, told PUNCH Online that he had to take alternative routes to drop passengers as the main road remained blocked for hours.

“I have never seen Barnawa like this. The road was blocked with tyres and stones. People were shouting, and security people were nowhere to be found at first. Everybody was afraid,” Bello said.

Confirming the incident, the state police spokesperson, DSP Mansir Hassan, simply said in a WhatsApp chat, “Yes, we have received the information about the incident and the CP has ordered a full-scale investigation into the matter.”

By late evening, additional police patrol vans were seen moving into Barnawa to restore order.

Some of the protesters gradually dispersed, though many vowed to return if the authorities failed to act swiftly.

The Kaduna State Government had yet to issue any statement as of the time of filing this report.