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Aba boils as soldiers kill two Igbo butchers

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From **Okey Sampson**, Aba

THERE was turmoil in Aba, the commercial hub of Abia State yesterday, following protests over the alleged killing of two Igbo butchers at the Waterside abattoir by soldiers.

According to the report, an unnamed soldier went to a bunk close to the abattoir in mufti to smoke Indian hemp after which he refused to pay, claiming he was a soldier.

When the man who sold the Indian hemp to him insisted he must pay, they had quarrel, which was said to have been 'settled' before he left.

However, the soldier reportedly came to the abattoir yesterday with four of his colleagues, in a hilux van and started shooting indiscriminately.

There was pandemonium in the area as people scampered for safety. When the shooting stopped, a pig rarer who was identified simply as Ojukwu was found dead.

It was gathered that when some of the butchers who saw what happened came to ask the soldiers what the matter was, the trigger happy soldiers shot and killed another butcher.

The soldiers, according to witnesses, after killing the butchers, whisked four others away.

This angered the butchers and joined by other people, they embarked on massive protest which shook the city.

The protest later took religious and ethnic colouration, as the protesters marched towards the Mosque on Hospital Road, but were dispersed by soldiers who kept watch over the edifice. Some Hausas in the city had to take refuge in the area command of the Nigerian police to avoid being attacked.

When our reporter visited the abattoir, tears flowed freely from people around as they mourned the death of their colleagues.

The commanding officer of the 14 brigade, Ohafia, Brig. General Lawrence Fejokwu, said the report he got was that soldiers went to the abattoir over a leadership tussle in the association which led to the fracas.

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