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## Ebonyi jailbreak: Death toll rises to 19

— 20th August 2016

From Emmanuel Uzor, Abakaliki

Fresh facts emerged yesterday on the casualty figure of the foiled jailbreak at the Abakaliki Maximum Prisons, Ebonyi State, when inmates allegedly staged a violent protest, which resulted to attempted jailbreak.

Saturday Sun investigation gathered that some of the inmates who sustained various degrees of gunshot wounds who were rushed to the Federal Teaching Hospital, FETHA 1, Abakaliki, have allegedly died bringing the casualty figure to

19.

Though the state Comptroller, Mrs. Adaobi Oputa, while speaking to newsmen on the outcome of the secret meeting with the Comptroller General of Prisons, swiftly parried question on the death status arising from the foiled jailbreak, she said 16 persons were admitted at the Federal Teaching Hospital including three prison staff, due to injuries sustained during the crisis.

However, it was further gathered that female inmates were allegedly raped by the rampaging male inmates during the confusion while some of the wounded female inmates were secretly whisked away to get medical attention in the hospital.

Meanwhile, the Comptroller General of Nigeria Prisons Service, Mr. Ja-afaru, Ahmed while addressing journalists after his meeting with Governor David Umahi in Abakaliki confirmed that only six inmates died in the incident, while ten others sustained injuries.

Mr. Ahmed further said he visited the prison facility to ascertain the level of damage on the prison and said the cause of the attempted jailbreak was the refusal of some inmates to submit themselves to routine check by the prison authority.

"I came in respect of the incident where few inmates tried to break the prison and in the process there were some casualties, which was unfortunate. About six inmates died in the incident while ten others were wounded and are responding to treatment. What happened was that some inmates refused to present themselves to routine prison check and some of them tried to cause jailbreak by forcing the inner gate of the prisons open and tried to break the main gate, while others attempted to climb the perimeter fence, however, with the help of security agencies in the prison, the incident was brought under control, but six inmates died in the incident", Mr. Ahmed said.

The Comptroller General further lamented what he termed slow justice dispensation in the country, which he said was responsible for the congestion in Nigeria prison facilities and called for speedy trials of inmates in various prisons across the country.

He said that Abakaliki prisons was supposed to accommodate only 378 inmates, but over 968 inmates are already in the facility of which over 812 inmates are awaiting trials.

Governor David Umahi decried the level of decay of infrastructure in the prison service and urged the federal government to implement the restructuring of the prison facility.

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