

1 feared dead, 6 injured as Bakassi boys, traders clash in Abia

From **Okey Sampson**, Umuahia

THERE was pandemonium in Umuahia, the Abia state capital, yesterday, as one trader was feared killed and six others injured, following a clash between traders at the Umuahia Timber Market, Ahiaeke Ndume, Ibeku, and personnel of Abia State Vigilante Service, a.k.a Bakassi Boys.

It was gathered that staff of Abia State Board of Internal Revenue had gone to the market to collect an annual levy of N18,000 from the traders.

However, in the process of collecting the levy, a disagreement was said to have ensued between the traders and staff of the board.

While the disagreement lasted, it was gathered that a member of the vigilante, who came with the BIR staff, started shooting sporadically and, in the process, seven traders were hit by bullets. One of the wounded traders was said to have later died, while the other six who sustained various degrees of injuries were receiving treatment at the Federal Medical Centre, Umuahia.

Speaking with journalists, the Chairman of the Market, Ndubuisi Nwogu, disclosed that the traders and the revenue agency had agreed on the mode of payment of the N18,000 annual levy and some traders had started making installment payments as agreed.

Nwogu said the traders were shocked when the BIR staff came to the market yesterday, and ordered traders to close shops. He said the staff of the revenue agency did not stop at that but went further to seal the entire market, shutting out traders who had already made some financial commitments to the agency, an action which did not go down well with some of the traders.

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