

#EndBadGovernance: Day of blood, looting, rage

- Security operatives shoot 6 dead in Niger, 13 injured, 11 arrested, irate youths raze LG secretariat

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• Faces at the End-Bad-Governance-And-Hardship protests in Abuja and Lagos, yesterday. Photos: MUDASHIRU ATANDA & Temitope Aina

From John Adams, Minna

The nationwide hardship protest commenced and witnessed violence in several parts of the country, including Yobe, Gombe, Kaduna, Sokoto, Kano and Borno states, yesterday.

The protests dubbed '10 days of rage' with the hashtag #EndBadGovernance organised to draw attention of the government to the biting hunger in the country was particularly bloody in Suleja, Niger State, where at least six youths were shot dead by security operatives. According to reports, over 15 others, who reportedly sustained varying degrees of bullet wounds, are in critical condition and have been taken to different health facilities in the area, including Gwagwalada Specialist Hospital, for treatment.

Trouble started when youths defied the early morning rain to assemble at the Suleja Old Motor Park for the protest. The police Area Commander, leading a team of riot police, attempted to disperse them. The youths reportedly resisted the police directives to vacate the area, insisting that their protest was peaceful and within the bounds of the law.

The police team was said to have released teargas in an attempt to disperse the protesters. This action angered the youths, who maintained they had no intention of violence.

The youths began hauling stones, sticks, and other objects at the police. In the process, they vandalised a police vehicle attached to the Area Commander's office (registration number NPF 9102C).

The youths then followed the police to the Area Commander's office and attempted to storm the station but were prevented by heavily armed officers.

The confrontation escalated, resulting in the police using live ammunition. "I can tell you that the number of those who sustained bullet injuries are more than 15, and we don't know if they will survive it," the source disclosed.

Miffed by the killings, the youths burnt down the Tafa Local Government secretariat. Details of the extent of the destruction were sketchy as at the time of filing this report, but multiple sources said the fire touched a major part of the secretariat and was seriously vandalized with properties looted.

The state police command public relations officer Wasiu Abiodun confirmed the burning down of the local government secretariat, saying "the hoodlums vandalized the Secretariat, partly setting it ablaze, two cars were also burnt and two other vandalised. But he was silent on the deaths but merely said some hoodlums were arrested.

In the Lekki area of Lagos, anti-riot policemen drawn from the RRS deployed at the Admiralty Lekki Phase 1 Toll Gate fired canisters of teargas to restore normalcy following an attempted eruption of violent protest.

Some protesters had gathered in the area in spite of a court order restricting protest and banning protesters within the vicinity.

A Lagos High Court had on July 31, 2024, restricted protesters taking part in the nationwide protest to the Gani Fawehinmi Freedom Park in Ojota and Peace Park in Ketu area of the state.

The court presided over by Justice Emmanuel Ogundare ordered the restriction following a preemptive ex parte application filed by the state Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, Mr Lawal Pedro.