

5 feared killed in Lagos market crisis

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By Christopher Oji

Pandemonium broke out yesterday at the Balogun Market in Lagos Island when two young men of Yoruba and Igbo extraction engaged in a deadly fight that led to the death of five persons.

The two combatants stabbed themselves to death, causing hostility between the two tribes. The development forced traders and customers to scamper for safety. However, after the dust settled, three other persons were confirmed dead, bringing the number of deaths to five while many people sustained serious injuries.

According to a witness, trouble started when two middle-aged men scouting for customers engaged in an argument that snowballed into a fisticuff.

It was gathered that during the fight, the Yoruba man allegedly stabbed the Igbo man in his lungs with a bottle, but when the Igbo guy picked up the broken bottle to retaliate, he collapsed and died on the spot.

A trader, Mike Nwokike, who spoke with Daily Sun, said: “We can’t say how many people have died. I know that five people, including the two men fighting for money and three others have died. But, I must tell you that before nightfall, the casualties will swell because many people were stabbed and are presently taking treatment in different hospitals. The injuries are too severe, many people will not survive.

“The way the issue was handled showed deep tribalism and ethnic hate. Two people were fighting and one was killed, instead of arresting the suspect and handing him over to the police, they gave him jungle justice. After avenging their tribesman’s death, they started attacking other people that are not from Yoruba extraction and attempting to set shops ablaze.”

Another trader, Saliu Lamidi, said: “I don’t believe it is hate or tribalism. It is normal to give jungle justice to anyone that kills. The two were fighting over who brought customers because of money and the Igbo guy who thought that the market belonged to them tried to intimidate our brother. But, because the Igbo guy was stronger than the Yoruba guy and was bullying him, the Yoruba guy used the weapon at his disposal to defend himself. If he stabbed him, and he did not die, why did the Igbo man stab him to death? I think the jungle justice administered on him will stand as a deterrent to others who think that they can bully people because they are bigger than them.”

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Another trader, Fidelis Mouka said: “It started like a normal quarrel between the two men. They were quarrelling over money and all of a sudden, they started fighting. One of them, a Yoruba man, stabbed the other man, an igbo man. The Yoruba man stabbed the Igbo man, who retaliated and

killed the Yoruba guy in the process. Well, we watched helplessly as the Igbo man was lynched. The Yoruba people did not stop at that as they started looting our goods and robbing customers. They used the opportunity to vent their anger on Ndigbo.”

As at 3pm, the market was still in disarray as armed youths believed to be street urchins and armed with dangerous weapons, took over the market.

Although the police had arrived at the scene, there was still tension and people were still counting their losses.

A lot of people have been searching for their workers and relatives.

However, Lagos State Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) CSP Benjamin Hundeyin, dismissed the claim that the fight was an ethnic one, saying, “The Lagos State police Command hereby wish to inform the general public that there was no tribal clash or disturbance between any ethnic groups and the others inside Balogun Market today. There was an incident of a free-for-all fight between some hoodlums and miscreants in the Balogun Market in the early hours of today at around 11am.

“During the fight, one Ebuka Adindu from Abia State stabbed one Sodiq Ibrahim from Kogi State to death and the said Ebuka Adindu in turn stabbed himself on the shoulder and became unconscious. He is currently under arrest in the hospital, where he is being treated. Investigation into the matter will be concluded and he will be prosecuted after he has been discharged from the hospital. There was no loss of innocent lives or injury to any person or damage to goods and properties of marketers inside Balogun Market.

“The Command wishes to reiterate that the incident is not a tribal clash, but purely between miscreants and hoodlums around the Market. Normalcy has been restored. Marketers and the general public on the Island and other parts of the state are encouraged to go about their businesses and other lawful endeavors without fear or apprehension.

“Commissioner of Police, Olohundare Jimoh, calls on all residents to remain law-abiding and cooperate with the police Command to sustain existing peace in the state and not to spread fear in the mind of the public as Lagos is generally peaceful.”