

METRO

...CRIME, CITY WATCH, COURTS

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One killed, as group brings 'O to ge' to Lagos

One person was reportedly killed while several others sustained injuries when some groups of activists were protesting against former Lagos State Governor, Bola Tinubu.

It was learnt that some activists, under the auspices of Free Lagos Orange Movement, held a rally to appeal to residents to come out en masse to vote against the All Progressives Congress (APC) governorship candidate, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, in the March 9 polls.

Free Lagos Orange Movement is a coalition of political parties and civil society organisations led by former President of the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA), Dr. Olisa Agbakoba.

It was learnt that the protesters had arrived the Airport Hotel as early as 7a.m. in four buses. But they were about to start the protest when a team of policemen from Rapid Response Squad (RRS) and policemen from MAN House stormed the venue and dispersed the protesters.

A witness, who simply identified himself as Ade, said as the policemen were shooting canisters of tear gas into the midst of the protesters who were shouting "Oto ge," "Enough is enough".

He said: "As this commotion was going on, another group of people just emerged from Alade Avenue, throwing bottles at the policemen. While this was going on, some of the policemen and protesters sustained injuries.

"Where I was standing in my shop across the road, I saw some of the protesters drag some of their members who sustained injuries into their waiting bus."

A bureau-de-change opera-



Scene of the clash. PHOTO: CABLE

tor, Malam Shaba Ali, said it was a serious situation at the Airport Hotel to Allen Bus Stop as most drivers left their vehicles to avoid being hit by stray bullets.

He said: "It was after the policemen had left the scene that we got information that one of the protesters, who was hit by stray bullet, died in the hospital where he was rushed to. It was a free-for-all between the police and the group.

"Initially, the first set of policemen drafted to the scene couldn't handle the protesters. The police had to call for rein-

forcement; it was then they were able to disperse them.

"I heard the protesters say that a vote for the governorship candidate is an extension of Tinubu's rule in Lagos State. Therefore, they would do everything possible to work against him during the election on March 9."

Broken bottles littered every part of the Obafemi Awolowo Way and the other side of the Airport Hotel.

The state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), CSP Chike Oti, said the group did not seek permission before em-

barking on the protest.

He said: "It is not true; nobody died during protest. We don't want a repeat of what happened in some parts of the state. The group only gathered at the Airport Hotel without informing the police about their gathering; there was nobody to hold responsible.

"When we learnt about the arrival of the group coming to do a rally, we quickly sent our men there. But it turned out to be a riotous mob. The only thing we could do was to disperse them with tear gas.

"We didn't want it to degen-

erate into something else because they had been throwing objects at one another. We also didn't want innocent people to be affected and vehicles damaged; that was why we used tear gas."

Earlier, the heavily armed policemen prevented entry and exit of vehicles into the hotel.

The policemen also parked a black Maria Truck belonging to the Lagos State Task Force in front of the hotel just as they ordered the blockade of all the two gates leading to the hotel and preventing people from gaining access to the Oranmiyan Hall where the press conference called by the group was to hold.

Subsequently, scores of people, who had come for the event, were stranded at the gate as they were prevented from entering, while those already sitting inside, including journalists, were not allowed to come out.

This put a temporary halt to the event tagged: "World Press Conference #Otoge Lagos Setting Lagos free from Bourdillon Bondage."

Speaking with journalists on the side line, Mr. Mark Adebayo, one of the conveners of the movement apologised for the late start of the press conference, blaming it on "serious security situation".

Addressing the press conference, the group's spokesperson decried the violence that characterised the Presidential and National Assembly elections on February 23 in some parts of the state.