

# Xenophobic attacks: Angry Nigerians attack Shoprite, MTN offices



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igerians yesterday protested the xenophobic killings of their countrymen in South Africa.

The spontaneous protest took place in some major cities across the country. The protesters attacked some businesses believed to have South African interest such as Shoprite and MTN offices. One person was reportedly shot dead at Ajah, Lagos during the protest.

The protesters, who attacked Shoprite at Ajah, said that destruction of South African firms would continue as long as Nigerians were not safe in South Africa.

It was learnt that the angry protesters burnt a police patrol vehicle after the police allegedly shot one of the protesters dead.

Following the reports of attacks in South African company across the state metropolis, the Shoprite located inside the Ikeja Mall, Alausa, was hurriedly shut down with staff locked inside.

Buyers were prevented from entering the mall while movement in and out of the Shoprite was halted

In the last couple of days a notice denouncing the xenophobic attacks in South Africa was placed at the entrances of the Shoprite. It reads: "Dear customers, we condemn the xenophobic attacks happening in South Africa in its entirety. These attacks are totally incompatible with the values of our company and we are not in any way in support of it."

One of the sales representatives at the Shoprite, Ikeja, told New Telegraph that they couldn't continue operation because of the possible attack by angry Nigerians.

“Many of the protesters may not remember that we are all Nigerians working for the South African firm. The best thing is to shut operation for now,” the female sales representative said.

Following reports of attacks and possible destruction of the properties belonging to the South African firms across the country, the South African telecommunications company, MTN, closed some of its outlets for fear of attacks by angry Nigerians.

The protesters later made attempt to enter the Shoprite at Ikeja, but were prevented by riot policemen.

Instead the protesters started throwing stones into the mall and damaging the windows and doors.

The Lagos State Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Bala Elkana, confirmed the attacks.

The PPRO said immediately the command received the distress call, a combined team of policemen from Ajuwe Area Command, Anti-Riot Mobile Policemen, Rapid Response Squad and Task Force officials were deployed to the scene to prevent further breakdown of law and order.

He said: "I don't have the record that someone was killed there. If there is any, we are going to make it known to the public."

Also, some angry youths yesterday invaded an MTN shop located on Ikot Ekpene Road in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State.

The attackers broke into the crowded shop at about 2.30p.m., and destroyed windows and a glass door.

"They ordered people out, destroyed computers, and took away cash and customers' phones," a sales lady, who pleaded anonymity, said.

She said nobody was hurt during the attack because they all ran out of the shop through the backdoor.

It was not yet clear if the attack was an isolated incident as authorities and the police were yet to speak on it.

The state PPRO, Odiko MacDon, did not respond to calls and text messages sent to him.

However, a politician, who spoke on condition of anonymity, described the attack as unfortunate and misdirected.

He said: “The attack on the MTN shop in Uyo is most unfortunate and misdirected because neither the building nor the computers belong to the South African people or government, even the people working there are our brothers and sisters.”

To prevent attack on their businesses, a Shoprite mall located on Adeniran Ogunsanya Street and MTN located on Bode Thomas, Surulere had to close early for business following the protest by the angry youth.

The youth who were mainly males expressed their displeasure at the way South Africans were attacking Nigerians in their country.

They called on the Federal Government to take proactive diplomatic actions that would stop how most Nigerians were being maltreated in

South Africa.

One of the protesters said “enough is enough”, adding that it was high time that President Muhammadu Buhari did something about the situation before they (youths) take the law into their own hands.

One of the MTN officials who begged for anonymity said that they opened at 8a.m., yesterday just like any other day until he got a call saying that the neighbouring mall: Shoprite, was under attack and that they (MTN) should close shop as soon as possible.

“We were scared and that led us to shut down the premises at about 2p.m., and asked all our staff to go home,” he said.

The fear of attacks by Nigerian youths yesterday forced Shoprite Polo Mall in Enugu to shut down indefinitely.

Games shop, which also shares the same building with Shoprite, equally shut its doors to its customers yesterday evening.

Both business concerns are owned by South Africans.

Policemen and other security agents were trying to maintain law and order around the complex.

When contacted, the state PPRO, Ebere Amaraizu, promised to get back to our correspondent but never did at the time of filing this report.

Meanwhile, shoppers who spoke with *New Telegraph*, said they were tired of attacks on Nigerians in South Africa and were heading to Roban Stores, a Nigerian indigenous shopping mall also in Enugu, to do their shopping.

An official of Shoprite, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said management of the company ordered the shutting down of the shop as a precautionary measure when they heard reports of attack on one of their shops in Lagos.

In Oyo State, youths protested at the Dugbe branches of Shoprite and Stanbic IBTC Bank.

A witness told *New Telegraph* that about 50 protesters stormed Shoprite at Dube about 5p.m. and protested against persistent attacks on Nigerians in South Africa.

The management of Odu'a Investments Company Limited, owners of the mall housing Shoprite, reportedly called the police immediately the protesters were got there. The police immediately took over the premises.

Similar protest was also carried out by youths at the Ring Road Shoprite branch in Ibadan.

Meanwhile, the Federal Government yesterday appealed to Nigerians not to attack South African companies operating in Nigeria in retaliation for the ongoing xenophobic attacks against Nigerians in South Africa.

Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, in a statement, described as deeply disturbing the reports that some Nigerians, angered by the xenophobic attacks in South Africa, have started attacking South African companies in Nigeria.

He said that targeting South African companies in Nigeria for attack was, for Nigerians, a classic case of cutting off your nose to spite your face, because the investors in such companies, especially MTN and Shoprite, were Nigerians.

Mohammed said the majority of the workers in the South African companies operating in Nigeria were also Nigerians, meaning that it is Nigerian workers who would be hardest hit if such companies were forced to shut down for fear of attacks.

The minister assured Nigerians that the Federal Government was already taking decisive measures to put an end to the persistent xenophobic attacks against Nigerians in South Africa.

Reacting to the attack in South Africa, the Chief Executive Officer of MultiChoice, owners of DSTV and GoTv, Mr. John Ugbe, condemned the attack, saying the firm was committed to uniting Africans through its programming and cultural initiatives.



“We advocate equality and condemn all forms of discrimination. The on-going violence in South Africa against foreign nationals is against the spirit of Africans and counter-productive to the decades of work done by African leaders and well-meaning organisations to unite the continent.

“We embrace and celebrate the diversity of varied nationalities, traditions, culture and religions from across the continent and beyond. This is demonstrated through our multinational staff complement, our multicultural supply chain, as well as the local and international content that we showcase on both our DSTV and GoTv platforms. We believe Africa’s full potential can only be realised through dialogue, peace and unity,” Ugbe said in a statement.

Also, the MTN Nigeria Plc. condemned the xenophobic attacks, killings and looting of shops and properties belonging to Nigerians and other foreigners residing in South Africa.

“MTN Nigeria strongly condemns hate, prejudice and xenophobia and reiterates our unequivocal condemnation of all violence.

“Everyone has the right to a world where their rights and freedoms are respected – the right to live and earn a living, freely, safely and protected by the law,” MTN said in a statement.

Also yesterday, The Lagos State government condemned the attacks on Shoprite Complexes at Jakande and Sangotedo area of Ajah.

The Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Gbenga Omotoso, said in a statement that the attacks were against the Nigerian spirit of accommodation and benevolence that the country in general and Lagos State in particular was noted for.

He said: “The Federal Government is in dialogue with South African Authorities to stop this obnoxious act. We appeal to our compatriots to eschew violence and any unlawful acts.”

“The Lagos State Government wishes to reiterate its commitment to providing a conducive atmosphere where businesses are conducted without hindrances.”

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