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Edo: Eight killed as protesters attack prisons, free inmates

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Street urchins yesterday hijacked the #EndSARS protests in parts of Benin, Edo State and unleashed mayhem on residents of the state.

At the end of the day, at least eight people were killed.

The protesters, who invaded the streets about 6.30a.m., made bon fires and blocked major roads in the ancient city of Benin. The hoodlums descended on the two separate buildings of Benin Correctional Centre on Sapele Road and Oko Medium Security Centre on Airport Road where they set several inmates, including those awaiting trial, hardened and condemned criminals, free.

Four of the prisoners reportedly lost their lives in the melee while soldiers later shot dead four protesters.

The protesters also set fire to the popular Ugbekun Divisional Police Station in Ikpoba Okha Local Government Area and several vehicles.

The hoodlums also freed all the suspects and vandalised the offices at the police station.

After a shootout with prison guards at the centre on Sapele Road, the hoodlums moved to the Oko Medium Centre on Airport Road where they unleashed terror on everybody and everything on sight.

It was learnt that the hoodlums swooped on the prison guards with AK47 rifles, cut to size guns and ut-

dangerous weapons before they could gain entrance into the complex.

Hundreds of inmates suspected to be hardened and condemned criminals were said to have been set free in the melee.

They also set fire on vehicles on the premises.

However, four inmates of the Medium Security Correctional Centre were not too lucky as they were killed while trying to escape. Others sustained gunshot wounds while trying to escape.

Residents of the area have to scamper for safety as guns boomed endlessly.

Several shops that dot the road leading into the Oko Medium Security facility were looted by the protesters.

It was alleged that distress calls by the awe-stricken personnel of the Oko Correctional Centre to the Navy, Air Force and Army were ignored during the attack.

There were reports that some inmates who had earlier been released might have led the attacks on the two centres.

New Telegraph learnt that the surging crowd of the protesters overpowered five armed guards in one of the facilities.

They also had a free day looting shops along the road leading into the correctional centre. They also carted away valuables from offices of the prison officials.

It was also learnt that immediately after the attacks at the Benin



Jail break in Edo

facility, security was alerted in Oko but that calls to the Nigerian Army and the Police for reinforcement were not responded.

The correctional facility has the capacity to accommodate 1,300 inmates.

"They came in their thousands and their mission was to free inmates. They have been communicating with the inmates because even before they broke into the facility, the inmates were already rioting inside the place," a source at the centre said.

No fewer than 1,500 inmates, among them 120 condemned criminals, were in the correctional facility, the source added.

Before the attack on Oko Correctional Centre, the suspected hood-

lums earlier razed the popular Oba Market Police Station, broke into its armoury and went away with guns and some uniforms.

While the hoodlums were wreaking havoc on residents of Ring Road, Sapele Road and Airport Road areas, some other street urchins attacked Ugbekun Police Station and set it ablaze.

Several vehicles were also torched during the attack and suspects arrested for various crimes were also set free.

The Public Relations Officer of the State Correctional Centre, Mr. Suleiman Aminu, did not pick his calls to confirm the attacks.

Also, the state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), SP Chido Nwabuzor, could not be reached for comment on the attacks on the police stations.

However, the Public Relations Officer of the Nigerian Correctional Service, DCC A. C. Njoku, confirmed the attacks in a statement.

He said: "This is unfortunate as this does not portray the peaceful, no violence, no destruction mantra hitherto presented by the #ENDSARS protesters."

"The exact figures of escapees and casualties are yet to be confirmed and will be communicated after preliminary investigations."

"Efforts are underway to arrest the situation and return normalcy back to the centres. The Armed Squad Personnel of the Service is working tirelessly to bring the situation under control."

"The public is therefore enjoined to go about their businesses in a peaceful manner, resist and shun attempts of being used to destabilize the peace in the state by destructing individual and public institutions."

Meanwhile, doctors at a private hospital in Benin were yes-

terday battling to save the life of an official of the Oko Medium Security Centre, Mr. Benjamin Aduya, who sustained machete cut injuries when hoodlums attacked the facility.

At least four persons were reportedly shot dead at Auch in Et-sako West Local Government Area of Edo State.

This occurred during an early morning protest in the area.

It was learnt that the protest later turned violent as youths embarked on extortion of passers-by and motorists playing the busy Benin-Auchi-Okene-Abuja Road.

The protesters were said to have beaten up a military officer to a pulp. This forced soldiers to storm the scene for a reprisal which led to the killing of four protesters.

The soldiers' intervention was said to have eased the gridlock on the Auchi-Okene-Lokoja Road.

The protesters were said to have blocked the road from Jattu Junction to Aviele. In its response to the violence, the Edo State government yesterday imposed a 24-hour curfew across the state till further notice.

The curfew took effect from 4p.m. yesterday.

Government said while it respected the rights of its citizens to undertake legitimate protests, it could not sit idly when hoodlums had taken laws into their hands to unleash mayhem on innocent citizens and the state.

By the directive, schools and businesses were to shut down activities accordingly.

Parents were advised to rein in their children, youths and wards, to forestall further breakdown of law and order.

"The responsibility of government is to protect lives and property and maintain law and order, therefore, anyone found outside in violation of the curfew would be dealt with according to the law," government said.

#EndSARS: 19 cops injured as thugs chase policemen in Lagos

Muritala Ayinla and
Taiwo Jimoh

Again, violence erupted in Lagos as hoodlums used the cloak of the #EndSARS protests to unleash terror on policemen attached to the Rapid Response Squad (RRS).

During the attack, which occurred on the Herbert Macaulay Way, Yaba, the hoodlums attacked about 19 policemen and burnt a police van and vandalised others. Some of the policemen, who were in three vans, sustained injuries during the attack.

A viral video on the social media shows the policemen running helter-skelter while the protesters were stoning them.

The protesters also attacked other road users and some commercial buses.

The protesters also stormed the Lagos State Secretariat, Alausa, and other premises. They prevented workers from entering the premises and looted houses and shops in some areas.



Ugbekun police station allegedly vandalized by an angry mob, following the EndSARS protests... yesterday. PHOTO: NAN

As early as 7a.m., the protesters locked all the entrances to the Secretariat and turned back motorists and pedestrians from coming out and going into the Secretariat.

Many workers couldn't access their offices while several others got stuck on the roads as the protesters blocked the several major roads.

The protesters insisted on zero vehicular movement until their new demands were met by the Federal Government.

The hoodlums attacked the po-

licemen attached to the RRS who were in a convoy. The policemen, including the driver, took to their heels. The hoodlums also chased the policemen. While some of the policemen managed to escape, those not lucky were brutalised by the angry youth and thugs.

For hours, commuters were stranded at various bus stops across the Lagos metropolis as the protesters barred vehicular movement.

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