

Tuesday, February 21st, 2012 | Posted by [Infomister](#) |  
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# Another Bloody Day in Lagos as NURTW Clash Claims 10 Lives at Idumota (Lagos Island)

The orgy of violence and needless killings continued Monday in Lagos following the bloody clash by factions of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), at Idumota (Lagos Island) area of the state. At the end of the “war”, no fewer than 10 persons laid dead with many others sustaining varying degrees of injury, and properties worth millions of naira destroyed. Last Saturday, a petrol tanker fell in Mile Two area of the city, killing five persons and burning over 39 vehicles. Last week too, nine persons were killed by the Lagos Island “Area Boys” as the struggle for power continued in the district.

The previous weeks have recorded rounds of violence in the Mushin area of the city with heavy casualties from warring factions as well as even innocent residents of the area.

The NURTW clash was said to be between the Isale-Eko faction and Onola-Agarawu-Itafaji boys over the on-going leadership crisis in NURTW.

Streets affected by the clash were Onala, Isale-gangan, Aro Lawyer, Jankara, Dosumu, Adeniji, Princess, Agarawu, Itafaji and other suburbs.

As at press time, about 12 persons were reportedly injured just as five cars were burnt by the warring factions.

The fight which started at about 4am Monday was just one in a series of clashes by the NURTW that has hit the area in recent times with rising casualty figures. The area had literally sat on a keg of gunpowder, as it explodes regularly, and most times uncontrolled.

An eyewitness said one of the warring factions mostly made up of youths had stormed Isale-Gangan street and set two cars ablaze.

In the ensuing melee, they reportedly pushed one of the cars inside the building at No. 28; Isale-Igangan Street. The building which housed a photo studio named New Star Photo and an Automated Teller Machine (ATM) was set ablaze by the hoodlums after bathing the building with petrol.

The eyewitness said the building was razed because the attempt to loot the ATM was unsuccessful.

THISDAY gathered that peace was only restored to the area when riot policemen as well as Rapid Response Squad (RRS) personnel arrived.

Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC) were also deployed in Itafaji, Idumagbo Avenue and Tom Jones areas of the Island to forestall more mayhem.

Residents had been living in fear on a daily basis because of the running factional crisis.

According to a resident who identified himself as Jide Olabode, the hoodlums from Isale-Eko had stormed the area in the dead of the night all geared up for a fight.

He said: "The hoodlums who were all garbed in black came to our area and started shooting into the air, daring us to come out and challenge them. Their attack was to avenge the death of nine of their members who were casualties of the supremacy battle in NURTW two weeks ago."

The attempt by the night guards to alert the residents was said to have infuriated the hoodlums who then began to vandalise vehicles parked in the area.

Olabode said the Onala faction immediately staged a counter attack few hours later and unleashed mayhem. He lamented that the victims of the attack were innocent by-standers coming to the island who had no hand in the early morning clash. He blamed the slow response of the police for the loss of lives.

When contacted, the spokesman of the state Police Command, Mr. Joseph Jaiyeoba, a superintendent of police, however said there were no casualties.

He said: "The report I got stated that there was no casualty neither was anybody injured."

He however admitted that some vehicles were vandalised and shops ransacked.

He urged the citizenry to go about their normal activities, adding that the police were at alert to forestall any breakdown of law and order in the state.

The police spokesman said no arrest was made because the hoodlums had fled at the superior power of the police.

To calm frayed nerves, the duo of Alhaji Rafiu Olohunwa and Alhaji Musiliu Akinsanya, the two top contenders for the chairmanship of the Lagos State branch of the NURTW, were recently banned by the national leadership from contesting in the forthcoming elections.

THISDAY gathered the ban was to curb the escalation of the violent clashes by the members of the two factions in the state. Twelve persons have been reportedly killed and several others injured in the five-day running clash between the two factions.

In a statement signed by the National President of the union, Alhaji Nojeem Yasin, and General Secretary, Comrade Kingsley Uko, the union had banned the duo from contesting elections into office of Lagos State chapter of the NURTW.

Giving reasons for the ban, the union said the duo were suspended for anti-union activities which was meant to create hitches in the forthcoming state council delegates' conference.

The release reads in part: "In a bid to gain undue advantage over other contestants, the suspended duo have been harassing and intimidating other

contestants and voters. In the long run, this might lead to a breakdown of law and order in the state.”

The union urged members not to succumb to any acts of intimidation, adding that they should go about their daily activities.



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