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Nigeria: Four Policemen, Three Civilians Feared Killed in OPC-Drivers' Clash

This Day (Lagos)
29 August 2008

Posted to the web 29 August 2008

THIS DAY

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Tunde Sanni
Ibadan

A violent clash between Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC) and men of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) in Ibadan, last night, left four policemen and three civilians dead.

Police Spokesperson, Olabisi Okuwobi, however confirmed the death of one policeman with three other policemen injured in the bloody fracas, adding that it was not possible to confirm the casualty from the OPC side, as injured OPC members were evacuated from the troubled zone by their colleagues.

Vehicles belonging to some identified OPC members were set ablaze by the aggrieved drivers. The actual number could not be ascertained, but two of them were sighted when newsmen visited the scene around 7p.m. yesterday.

Identified victims in the melee, according to eye-witnesses account, included one Jamui and one Guusi from the NURTW side, while four policemen were believed to have been felled in the gun battle.

Sources told THISDAY that trouble started when OPC members in a bus heading to Osogbo from Lagos, for the annual Osun Festival ran into a traffic snarl at the Iwo road end of Ibadan/Ife road.

It was learnt that one of the female occupants of the OPC bus alighted from the bus to control traffic, and in the process, the vehicle had a slight brush with an unmarked NURTW bus, which degenerated into hot altercations.

In the process, the OPC woman reportedly slapped a member of the NURTW, leading to reinforcement from the workers union to repel OPC attack.

One of the OPC members reportedly pulled a gun and shot into the air to disperse the drivers who had increased in number, and pave the way for their escape.

Luck, however, ran against the OPC team, as the drivers, showing their knowledge of Ibadan terrain, ambushed the OPC bus at the Wema Junction of the Ife Road, abducting five of them.

An attempt by the OPC members to free their abducted members and escape from the trouble spot was foiled by the drivers, with the attendant

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traffic jam.

Caught up in the gridlock was a bullion van coming from Ikire end of the road, with its police escort firing several warning shots to scare away hoodlums.

Stray bullets from the policemen reportedly hit some people, which either killed or injured them.

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Unable to contain the bloody face-off, police at Egbeda and Testing Ground police stations requested for reinforcement, leading to arrival of another batch of policemen in a Hilux van who, on arrival, started shooting into the air.

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