

Several Cars Vandalised as Hausa, Yoruba Clash Claims Five in Lagos

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- Military, police arrest 100 suspects, Mile 12 market closed

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No fewer than five persons were killed yesterday in an ethnic clash between Hausa and Yoruba traders at the popular Mile 12 area of Lagos that also left scores with varying degrees of injuries.

The clash lasted for hours before soldiers of the Nigerian Army and police personnel drawn from Rapid Response Squad (RRS) and Area H, restored peace to the area.

The fracas started off as a quarrel between northerners and some Yoruba traders and then it quickly escalated, claiming lives and properties, including the destruction of stalls and cars.

For hours, the rampaging factions armed with dangerous and offensive weapons like guns, broken bottles, cutlasses wreaked havoc on the market, destroying and burning down stalls.

THISDAY gathered that the clash was caused by a Hausa motorcyclist who hit a female trader and attempted to flee despite pressure by passers-by that he must take her to the hospital.

Egged on by his fellow northern motorcyclists, who had by then assembled at the scene, the motorcyclist refused to budge, arguing that the union of motorcyclists should take care of the woman.

According to him, since the union was always quick to collect tolls from them, they should also take care of the hospital bill from the accumulated levies.

Angered by the aloof attitude of the riders, an argument ensued which later led to a fight between northerners and Yoruba traders. It subsided briefly when the Yoruba traders left, only for them to regroup and return full force.

Having regrouped, they invaded the market, chanting war songs and attacking the Hausa traders, who were mostly in the vegetable section of the market where tomatoes, beans and pepper are sold.

In the process, several stalls were burnt down, while three Hausa traders who could not escape to safety were killed in cold blood.

As at press time, the Lagos State Commissioner of Police Fatai Owoseni, RRS Commander, ACP Olatunji Disu, and other senior police officers were at the scene to stem the tide.

The fracas spilled over to surroundings areas like Ketu and Owode and led to serious traffic snarl that crippled commercial activities in the entire area and its surroundings.

The army was deployed in the scene to assist the police to restore peace and as at press time, they had arrested over 100 potential suspects.

Confirming the incident, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Dolapo Badmus, a Superintendent of Police, said: "There was a distress call that some groups of people are engaging in a free for all fight at the Agiliti area of Mile 12, Lagos.

"The police command mobilised men from the Rapid Response Squad, Mobile Unit and Area H Command to restore normalcy.

"The commissioner of police in charge of Lagos State, Fatai Owoseni led the operation to restore peace.

"Right now, the police is restoring normalcy to the area while the CP is engaging the market people and community leaders in peace talks. Investigations are ongoing to unravel the root cause of the fracas."

In order to arrest the development, the Lagos State Government ordered the closure of the Mile 12 market. The governor, Akinwunmi Ambode, also announced the restriction of movement on four streets in the area including Oniyanri Street, Maidan Street, Agiliti 1 and Agiliti 2 Streets.

Addressing reporters at the Lagos House, Alausa, Ambode said the decision to shut the market and restrict movement on the streets was to aid security agencies restore calm in the area.

"In order to further restore calm, I have ordered that Mile 12 market be temporarily closed and urged traders, community leaders and other stakeholders to eschew violence; be calm and law abiding.

"Furthermore, I have also ordered the temporary restriction of movement in the following streets: Oniyanri Street, Maidan Street, Agiliti 1 and Agiliti 2," he said.

The governor said the police and security operatives were deployed in the area to quell the dispute, assuring residents that peace would be restored in the area.

Meanwhile, a trailer laden with goods crashed and fell on the ever busy Mobolaji Bank Anthony way, a few meters from the Army 9 Brigade, Ikeja Cantonment.

To ease traffic buildup, collaborative efforts by personnel from the Lagos State Traffic Management Agency (LASTMA), NEMA and the police were ongoing at press time.