

Two Killed, Patrol Van Burnt as Police, Motorcyclists Clash in A'lbom

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Okon Bassey in Uyo

Two persons were reportedly killed and 19 others arrested in a violent clash between commercial motor cyclists and Police surveillance team in Eket Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State over attempt by the police to enforce the ban and restriction of the activities of the motor cyclists in the area.

The clash, which occurred yesterday, also led to the burning of a patrol vehicle belonging to the Eket Divisional Police Station

The incident followed last week's killing of another commercial motorcyclist and two days' protest by the operators in Uyo, the Akwa Ibom State capital,

In an attempt to check the upsurge in crime in the state, the state government in conjunction with the police authority had banned commercial motorcycle operators from operating in some of the local government areas from 6 p.m. to 6a.m. daily.

While trying to enforce the order in Eket, the police surveillance team chased the motorcyclists from the road and impounded their motorcycles.

According to an eye witness who did not want his name in print, one of their cyclists was shot dead by the police while chasing the operators.

"Last Sunday our member was shot dead in the night and the corpse has been deposited in mortuary at Immanuel General hospital , Eket," he said.

He added that the incident that caused them to embark on protest, occurred yesterday when a policeman beat a motorcyclist and he collapsed on the spot before the victim was rushed to hospital.

He said the victim identified as Udo from Idung Udoe in the area died while receiving treatment at Immanuel General Hospital , Eket.

"Our member, Udo from Idung Udoe in Eket died last night from injuries he sustained in the hands of police; so we revolted." He said the youths and all motorcycle operators took the corpse to Eket LGA and later to the Police Station as the council Chairman, Frank Archibong was not available to address them.

He said when the police prevented them from entering the station, the corpse of the deceased was returned to the mortuary.

He said all the cyclists and the youths regrouped and moved to police checkpoint along James Town road and burnt down their patrol vehicle as policemen at the checkpoint escaped.

When contacted, the state Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Odiko McDon said the restriction order was from the state government as a strategy to check cultism and all forms of criminality in the area.

McDon denied knowledge of death of any commercial cyclist in connection with the clash with police while trying to enforce the restriction order.

He, however vowed that police would stop at nothing in ensuring that the order, which helped to checkmate criminality in Ikot Ekpene, is implemented in Eket

He hinted that 19 persons have been arrested in connection with the patrol van set ablaze by the irate cyclists.