

Stray bullet kills man, colleagues protest

ANAYO OKOLI, Awka

SHOE Manufacturers Association of Anambra State (SMAAS) Friday embarked on a peaceful demonstration to protest the killing of one of its members, Mr. Victor Okunoja, by stray bullet allegedly from a soldier believed to be a member of the joint army, police team deployed in Onitsha to check the activities of MASSOB and NARTO who have been having a running battle with government for over one month now.

The SMAAS members carried placards with inscriptions such as, "Are the soldiers deployed to kill law abiding citizens?", "MASSOB and NARTO are not on the streets but motor parks, "Curfew is unnecessary, send the soldiers back to the barracks, they are causing more harm than good, "Governor, focus attention on armed robbers terrorizing the people on the streets of Onitsha",

"Enough of killing of innocent citizens by soldiers, this is no more soldiers for peace, they are on revenge mission", "Call these soldiers to order, many innocent people have been killed", "Are soldiers supposed to shoot indiscriminately in the market?"

It took the intervention of the president of the association, Hon. Dan Chikwendu Okolie and his executive members to calm the aggrieved traders down as they threatened and made a move to block the ever busy Onitsha - Owerri Road by Obodoukwu road junction to press home their anger.

Addressing the traders, Okorie said, "At about 2.30pm, Wednesday, the Agbor, Delta State born Okunoja went inside the relief market near SMAAS to buy materials, as he was coming back, he had a gun shot from one of the three soldiers who were in pursuit of a young man for a reason we didn't know'.

"The soldiers were shooting indiscriminately in the market and their bullet brought down Okunoja who was rushed to Pieta Hospital by Evangelist Dan Obi and other executive members of the association and he was in the hospital until this morning when he died at about 3.00.

The association president told his members that he had reported the matter to the DPO Okpoko police station, CSP Obiejesi, whom he said contacted the Onitsha area commander and the acting state commissioner of police including the member representing Okpoko constituency in the state house of assembly, Hon. Njideka Ezeigwe.

"We are protesting to the state government to call the soldiers and the police to order to stop unleashing terror on people. They are abusing the power given to them. We are not MASSOB members neither are we NARTO. We are only shoe manufacturers", Okolie said.