

YORUBA/ EGUN CLASH: Two bodies recovered as Lagos demolishes structures

• Residents sleep in boats, open-fields; accuse govt of flouting court order

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TWO bodies of the residents of Otodo Gbami community, Eti-Osa Local Government, who drowned on Wednesday, were recovered, yesterday from the lagoon by a search and rescue team constituted by the community.

Vanguard gathered that the residents had been searching for the victims since Wednesday and could only recover two of the bodies yesterday. One of the bodies was identified as Wheda Agonhu, a female while the other was a male.

Speaking to Vanguard, Abdulrahman Sehnu, said that the bodies of the victims were recovered by a search and rescue team constituted by the community.

He noted that the search was still on to recover others who also drowned in the river behind the community.

30, 000 residents displaced-NGO

While the residents were still counting their loss, the Lagos State Government stormed the community, to demolish illegal structures within the community, displacing more residents.

Justice and Empowerment Initiatives, JEI, a non governmental organisation, NGO, disclosed that 800 structures have been either burnt or demolished, rendering some 30,000 residents homeless.

Police Public Relations Officer, PPRO had on Wednesday said the state Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development will move in to demolish the remaining shanties and clear the rubble caused by the inferno.

Edukpo Tina, a young woman in Otodo Gbami community, narrated that officials of the state government accompanied by policemen stormed the community at about 12:00 am yesterday.

She said, "Police came again after midnight with bulldozers and started breaking everywhere, putting fire on peoples' houses. They are seriously beating our people and threatening to shoot unless we leave. All of us are on top of water now, there is nowhere to go."

Residents sleep in boats, open-field

A resident, who pleaded anonymity, lamented that the structures left in the community cannot shelter the huge population, saying; "the structures standing in the community cannot accommodate the entire members of the community."

Following non-availability of structures in the community, he added that the residents were



• Remnants of Otodo Gbami community yesterday. PHOTO: Monsuru Olowoopejo



• Some of the suspects arraigned over the clash, yesterday. PHOTO: Joseph Undu

forced to sleep inside their boats while others are passing the night in the community open field; the only available space in the community.

Baale, others charged to court
A Harvard University researcher, Aderemi Adedoyin, 31, has been arraigned before a Lagos magistrate's court at Igboere on a two count charge alongside 36 other suspects while others are still at large.

Adedoyin, who is also a master's degree student of the University of Lagos, according to police source, was arrested on Monday following information from members of the public to Ilasan police division that there was a clash at Otodogbami quarters, Lekki phase 1, Eti-Osa, Lagos between Egun people of Cotonou, Benin Republic and Nigerians resident in the area.

Ilasan police team led by DSP Ukadike mobilised to the scene

and got him and other suspects arrested; he was detained at the station before being charged to court.

The counts read: "That you Adedoyin and 36 suspects and others now at large on the eight of November, 2016 about 10: 00 am at Otodogbami community in Eti-Osa local government area Lagos magisterial district did conspire together to commit felony to wit riot and did assemble ourselves with bottles, daggers and other dangerous weapons disturbing the peace of the area thereby committed an offence punishable under section 45(2) of the criminal law of Lagos state, 2011."

Magistrate JOA Adepoju granted him bail on self-recognition upon presentation of his original documents.

Meanwhile Vanguard investigation revealed that, Adedoyin was employed by Harvard University to conduct

"Ethnographic research on housing at Otodogbami" since May 2016.

He is said to have been visiting the community week-in week-out to gather data for the research before the unfortunate incident happened.

Adedoyin who narrated his ordeal to Vanguard said when he got to Otodogbami that fateful day to gather data as usual, barely five minutes after his arrival, the same police that drove in as he was coming in to Otodogbami started shooting sporadically in the air before they walked up to him and started beating him.

According to him, the police hit him on his arm and he fell down as they continued to hit him and later handcuffed his leg with another suspect that was also arrested at the scene before driving them to the station in their truck. He said his ankle seriously hurts that he can't even

walk uprightly now.

Meantime confirming the fate of the Baale to Vanguard, a resident, who identified himself simply as Emmanuel, said that the Baale of the community, Dansu Hunpe, and others arrested on Monday, have been arraigned by the police.

Emmanuel disclosed that the Baale and some residents, who were arrested when they went to seek for his (Baale) bail at the Police station, have been charged to court at the Igboere Magistrate court.

According to him, "We are still at the Igboere magistrate Court, Lagos Island. That is where they brought the Baale. This is sad."

Residents accuse govt of flouting court order

JEI in a statement issued by its Co-Founder / Co-Director, Megan Chapman, condemns the removal of existing structures within the community by Nigerian Police Force and Lagos State government officials, saying; "They acted against earlier court order."

According to Chapman, "On November 7, 2016, Justice Onigbanjo of Lagos State High Court issued an injunction restraining Lagos State Government and the State Commissioner of Police from demolishing waterfront communities – including Otodo Gbami – or evicting residents there from or otherwise giving effect to the October 9th, 2016 eviction threat.

"There is absolutely no legal basis for eviction or taking over of land in the aftermath of either security or fire incident. We further note there have been no statutory or paper notices whatsoever served on any residents of Otodogbami.

"Rather, the police are acting completely outside the scope of the law and in overt disregard for a subsisting order of court. We call on all conscientious citizens concerned for democracy and rule of law to join in condemning this action."

Narrating further, the Co-founder said: "By the time JEI arrived in Otodogbami, about a third of the community – an estimated 800 structures – had been razed to the ground and fires were still smouldering across the community. An estimated 30,000 people rendered homeless in a matter of hours tried to recover what properties they could and dozens of people huddled in boats off the shore of the community."

Chapman alleged that the policemen deployed to the community worked in tandem with those that initiated the fire to serve private interests of Otodogbami's wealthier and more powerful neighbours."