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12 killed as subsidy protests turn bloody

on JANUARY 10, 2012 · in HEADLINES | 12:10 am

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LAGOS – The nationwide strike action called by organized labour and its civil society allies against the removal of the subsidy on petrol practically shut down the country yesterday as workers in private and public institutions abstained from duty. The strike action which was peaceful in most parts, however, turned bloody in Kano, Lagos and Benin where at least 12 persons were killed in controversial circumstances.

Two persons were reportedly killed in Lagos when a Divisional Police Officer attached to the Pen Cinema Police Station shot at some youths who took opportunity of the absence of traffic to play football along the road. The Inspector General of Police Hafiz Ringim promptly ordered the arrest of the DPO who he said should face trial for murder.

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Seven persons were killed in Kano while another three were killed in Benin during yesterday's strike action that culminated in the shut down of banks, airports and the nation's sea ports.

In the midst of the strike, Finance Minister Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala disclosed that the government had not closed the door to negotiations even as she admitted that the administration as those before it was seriously mistrusted by Nigerians.

One of the protesters killed in Lagos was identified as Ademola Aderitan, but the identity of the second who was said to have died later at the hospital from gunshot wound, was not known at the time of this report. Vanguard gathered that the death and injuries occurred after the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) in charge of Pen Cinema, fired shots to disperse some youths who were playing football in Ogba area of Lagos.


But in a swift reaction, the state Commissioner of Police, Mr Yakubu Alkali ordered the immediate arrest of the DPO, identified as Segun Olubunmi, Chief Superintendent of Police. It was gathered that the visibly angry Alkali, personally disarmed the DPO when he was brought to the command headquarters, Ikeja, before directing men of the State Criminal Investigation Department to whisk him to Panti for further investigation.

[anarchy, says Mark](#)


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DEAR GOD, I WANT TO TAKE A MOMENT TO SAY THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING YOU HAVE DONE FOR ME. AMEN

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Subsidy protesters at Gani Fawehinmi park at Ojota, Lagos during the Labour/Civil society protest, yesterday.

According to an eye witness, the DPO was driving in a pick-up patrol van with plate number RRS 101 LA and on getting to Yaya Abatan Crescent in Ifako Ijaye Local Government Area, the road was reportedly blocked with tyres by youths who were playing football. It was not too clear what led to the sad incident, but a source at the command headquarters said the DPO claimed one of the players attempted to disarm him, necessitating his firing some shots.

The bullets reportedly hit four of the players, one of whom died before reaching the hospital, while the second one died later at the hospital. The killer cop however fled the scene after the incident. Aggrieved youths in their hundreds were said to have carried the lifeless body of Mr Aderitan in a wheel barrow to Pen Cinema to protest the killing.

The strike in Lagos was described as peaceful by Alkali but for the misdemeanor of the DPO who was formerly in charge of the State Anti Robbery Squad, Ikeja.

The CP stated that the DPO was on his own as the command did not direct him to act in such manner, adding, "he would have to carry his cross because the command did not send him to kill any innocent Nigerian."

It was gathered that the Inspector General of Police, Hafiz Ringim has ordered the arrest of the DPO and he may be charged for murder after his dismissal from the force.

There were bonfires in almost all the major roads in the state, such Ikorodu, Oshodi/Apapa Expressway, Badagry Expressway, Abeokuta Expressway among others.

Banking, Aviation, Maritime and downstream sectors shut down

Factories and other manufacturing concerns and government offices including the Lagos State Secretariat were shut down and deserted.

Apart from Labour and its civil society allies, under the banner of Labour and Civil Society Coalition, LASCO, other visible groups that participated in the protest included Save Nigeria Group, Occupy Nigeria, Nollywood actors and actresses, Nigerian Bar Association, NBA, Nigerian Medical Association, NMA and other professional bodies.

The protesters displayed various anti-government and subsidy placards with various inscriptions such as: "Give us our votes back", "Jonathan resign now, you are incapable of governing", "Jonathan Must go now", "Fuel Subsidy is a scam", "No amount of black market injunction can stop us", "Lawyers reject fuel hike", "Boko Haram throws physical bomb, President Jonathan throws economic bomb", "Remove Corruption not subsidy."



Protesters along Ikorodu Road in Lagos, yesterday.

Leaders of LASCO coordinated the protest from five zones in Lagos; namely NLC secretariat, Yaba; TUC Secretariat, Idi-Roko; Office of the Agric and Allied Workers Union in Iyana-Ipaja; the Textile union secretariat on Acme Road, Ogba and the Lagos State University Campus in Ojo.

However, other Nigerians and groups independently carried their protests and mass rallies across the state. At the Yaba office of the NLC, the protesters, moved through Ojuelegba into the Ikorodu road. They aggrieved protesters moved along Fadeyi, Anthony, Maryland and Ojota chanting anti-government slogans.

At Fadeyi, the atmosphere became charged as a serious fight broke out between two groups of hoodlums, thereby causing panic among the protesters. The situation was however brought under control by intervention of the police who dispersed the hoodlums.

Addressing protesters at the Gani Fawehinmi Memorial Park in Ojota, Chairman of Joint Action Front, JAF and Joint Chairman of LASCO, Dr. Dipo Fasina, said the struggle for the liberation of Nigerians from bad leadership had just begun and called on Nigerians to insist that President Jonathan listens to the voice of

the people and reverts the hike in pump price of petrol.

He called on Nigerians to rise up and revolt against any government that sought to deprive them of their rights, stressing that labour would continue to “fight within the framework of revolutionary strategy that only guarantees total freedom.

“Jonathan is doing the bidding of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank and we rise to revolt this policy. Instead of allowing them to impoverish us the more, we must remove them from office because Nigeria is for Nigerians and not the IMF and World Bank. The people have said no to deregulation and removal of subsidy, the legislators have said no, so if the President cannot do the people's wish, then he should resign.”

Also speaking, Lagos lawyer and activist, Bamidele Aturu, said the mass protest had demonstrated clearly that “those in power cannot decide for Nigerians because the voice of the people supersedes the voice of a tiny few.”

He called on the Senate President, David Mark to convene an emergency session within the next three days and warned that failure to do so would attract the wrath of Nigerians. In the same vein, Secretary General of TUC, Chief John Kolawole commended the protesters for the large turnout, noting that the mass action is an expression that Nigerians are dissatisfied with the state of affairs in the country.

According to him, “for the avoidance of

doubt, this is the beginning of the struggle; tomorrow, we will intensify it. Everywhere, Christians and Muslims should organize prayers. It is a fight for everybody.”

Representatives of NMA, NBA, Nollywood and others also addressed the protesters.

Seven killed, 30 injured in Kano

In Kano, seven persons were said to have been killed while over 30 others were injured when the police fired shots at protesters. At the Murtala Specialist Hospital, the Chairman of the Nigeria Medical Association, Kano chapter, Dr Daiyabu Alhaji told reporters that over 15 persons were placed on admission and were being treated of gunshot wounds. At Abdullahi Wase Specialist Hospital, no fewer than 14 were also on admission for injuries sustained during the violent protest.

The Executive Secretary, Redcross Society of Nigeria in Kano, Musa Danladi Abdullahi told newsmen that 14 persons were brought to the Hospital adding that seven of them had injuries from gunshot.

But the Civil Society Group confirmed to reporters that Abdul Malik Rabi'u Badawa, 29 and Bashir Musa Zango, 27 lost their lives while effort was being made to ascertain the identities of others killed. There was a long queue of volunteers at the Nasarawa Special Hospital donating blood for injured protesters.



Protesters in Abuja, yesterday.

The police deployed Armoured Personnel Carrier complimented by a detachment of soldiers, Airforce personnel, and anti riot policemen to ensure that the protest which lasted two hours did not go out of hand.

Three killed in Benin

Also in Benin, Edo State capital, three persons were reportedly shot dead when hoodlums who hijacked the peaceful protest by the NLC in the state went on a looting spree.

It was learnt that the killings occurred when the hoodlums engaged the police in a shootout. The hoodlums were said to have invaded some business centers in Benin City. Meanwhile, non indigenes resident in Benin City have been evacuated to the State Police headquarter and the 4 Mechanized Brigade for safety by security agents.

FG urges understanding

Meanwhile, as Nigerians, yesterday, protested government's removal of fuel subsidy across the country, Finance Minister and Co-ordinating Minister of the Economy, Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, has urged the organised labour-led protesters to rethink their action in the interest of the

nation.

Speaking in an interview programme with Channels Television, Okonjo-Iweala, who was bombarded with questions including allegations that the government was in a hurry to remove fuel subsidy because it was broke, said the government took the decision to save the country from falling into the abyss of debt.

“Nigeria is not broke. The only problem is down the line, five years from now, if we continue borrowing at the rate we are borrowing, we will accumulate so much debt. If we pile domestic debt, it will get worse. We really have to reduce domestic debt, cut it down and plough the savings into infrastructure,” she said.

Asked if fuel subsidy could not be removed in instalments, Okonjo-Iweala said experience had shown that piece-meal removal of fuel subsidy had not worked and “in many cases caused a lot of anguish.”

On the sudden introduction of the policy midway into negotiation with organised labour and after the government functionaries gave an April implementation date, the Minister denied giving a specific date. “I never mentioned an April date. All I said was that we were still discussing.”

However, she noted that it was not compulsory that negotiations must be concluded before the policy could be implemented, saying, “things at times don’t have to be consequential. We should be doing things simultaneously. We should not allow the mistakes of the past to stop us

from moving forward.”

Asked if government had exhausted negotiation with stakeholders, Okonjo-Iweala said: “Absolutely not! I don’t think government should exhaust negotiations. It has to be continuous process and we must continue to find ways of improving the process.”

Admitting that the government is mistrusted, the minister said the citizenry were not to blame given past failed promises of the government, which she said was being addressed by the government through cutting the cost of governance and making government more efficient, fighting corruption and effective investment of subsidy savings in critical areas of need such as health, transportation, job creation and education among others.

She dismissed as false, allegations that government officials had stolen subsidy savings. “It is not true that the money has been stolen. We have not computed how much we have saved. At the end of January, we will know how much has been saved and decide where to channel it.”

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akpomedae1956

The Igbos are known to do the right thing at the wrong time! Can they really, in their

inner mind, feel comfortable with the recent oil subsidy removal? They are the ones who are, like the Isrealites, scattered all over the place; they are the ones going to need to break the bank doors, to pay the fares to get to their home-towns from wherever. The fight of the moment should even unite two strange bed-fellows! I can't see where marginalisation or number of states/local government area should come in. Not at all. That's another ball-game for another time. Ihejirika is the head of the army. Their man is the secretary to the federal government; yet boko haram keeps slaughtering Igbo Christians. Is that also a matter arising from whether or not they should protest along with other Nigerians? Anyway, I don't expect much informed reasoning to come from a people who have over time, sacrificed education for quick money making by starting to trade from the cradle - applying all means! Full-stop!

10 hours ago 3 Likes

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Ken Chijar Ekezie

Akpo. This is about Nigeria and not an opportunity to fly the ethnic kite. Stop this thing my friend.

1 hour ago

Like Reply

in reply to akpomedae1956

1 Like



dokside

Fellow Nigerians,

We all want the best
for our country, we all want the government
to build super highways, gigantic

hydro-power stations, wonderful rail system, create jobs and ultimately we want rapid economic growth, but this can only happen with proper economic planning and taking bold decisions such as what President Goodluck has done.

Subsidizing the importation of petrol with N1.3 trillion per year will ruin our Economy in no distant future. Consequently, Nigeria will run to IMF for assistance and IMF will definitely ask us to devalue our Naira (£1 – N500 or \$1 – N300).

Before the Economy crumples, why don't we remove this huge subsidy (N1.3 trillion) and let us use it to build mega projects such as:

1. The Mambilla hydropower plant at Taraba State.
2. A fast rail system that can travel at a speed of 150km/hour from Lagos – Kano.
3. New power plants to be sited in Enugu, Gombe, Kogi and Benue which will utilise our abundant coal reserves.
4. The 4th mainland bridge from Ikorodu – Lekki (26km).
5. A new expressway from Tin Can Island to Ibafo.
6. New Refineries to be sited in Lekki, Kogi and Bayelsa.
7. The Second Niger Bridge.

Note that in the process of building these aforementioned