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Four drown, hundreds displaced as Yoruba, Egun clash in Lagos

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By Monsuru Olowoopejo & Onozure Dania

Lagos—Over 200 structures in Otodogbami Community, Ikate, Lekki Phase1, Lagos were burnt and hundreds of residents displaced when Yoruba and Egun ethnic groups clashed within the community.

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Residents argued that four persons, including a child drowned while trying to escape through the river behind the community during the clash.

But Police Public Relations Officer, Lagos Command, Dolapo Badmos said that no death was recorded, saying “the effort of the police helped ensure that no death

was recorded.”

A source that pleaded anonymity however identified one of the four residents alleged to have drowned yesterday, as Whefa Agonhu, a female, adding that efforts were on to recover their bodies. He added that a 55-year-old woman, identified as Iya Abdulrahman, escaped the tragedy by swimming to the shore.

Vanguard gathered that the clash actually started last Monday between two men from the ethnic groups when one resident of Egun extraction was said to have assaulted a Yoruba indigene for beating up his fiancé.

In retaliation, the sources said that the Yorubas, armed with machetes and other weapons, allegedly attacked the community, blocking its entrance and vandalizing the community shrine.

Another resident, identified simply as Wale, told *Vanguard* that as the fight intensified, the Yoruba allegedly set structures within the community ablaze. And that efforts to get officials of the Lagos State fire service to put out the fire proved abortive.

It was learned that while the clash escalated, some shops were looted and goods worth thousands of Naira carted away.

Sources alleged that the policemen attached to Jakande Police division, in Lekki who were alerted immediately the clash started, could not restore peace to the community; rather they were accused of taking side with one ethnic group.

A resident told *Vanguard* that Baale of the Community, Hunpe Dansu and one Remi Adedoyin, were arrested for their inability to forestall the clash from escalating on Monday.

It was learned that Dansu was arrested when he visited the police station to complain over the issue. And they are to be charged to court.

There had been animosity between both ethnic groups within the community for sometime. The animosity, sources said had earlier led to one ethnic group setting the structures of other group ablaze.

Police rescue two-day-old baby

Reacting over the clash, Police PRO, Lagos Command, Dolapo Badmos, said that peace had returned to the community, saying “our intervention led to the rescue of a two-day old baby.”

She told **Vanguard** that supremacy battle triggered the clash between the Egun speaking community; mostly indigenes of Benin Republic and the Yoruba speaking community resulting in serious fighting and burning of houses.

The PPRO noted that the police immediately moved into the area to prevent further breakdown of law and order.

Giving a background of what transpired, she said, “There is an Egun community mainly made up of people from Republic of Benin. They actually occupy illegal shanties. We were alerted about the breakdown of law and order in the area and immediately went to check Otodogbami community, Ikate Lekki Phase 1, where there is a fight between the Benin- Yoruba communities fighting over the supremacy in the territory.

“It’s an illegal settlement area, most of the structures there are shanties and because of a protracted dispute between themselves, they set fire on their different shanties. The Police moved into the area to restore peace and in the

process of checking the area, we discovered that there was a woman who was trapped in one of the shanties with a two-day old baby who would have been burnt in the process,” Badmos added.

Lagos to demolish existing structures

She said the State Government has taken over the area while the State Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development would move in to demolish the remaining shanties and clear the rubbles caused by the inferno.

“The Police is alive to its responsibility of ensuring the safety of lives and property of its citizenry and would not hesitate to carry out the necessary action where the need arises,” she said.

Badmos also appealed to both factions in the community to remain lawful and shun acts of violence that could trigger civil unrest.

Another community protests

Meantime, at least 120 residents of Oko-Olomi community in Ibeju Lekki, Lagos yesterday besieged the Igboosere Magistrate’s Court protesting the failure of the police to arraign land grabbing suspects, Alhaji Mutairu Owoeye and Ganiyu ‘Garba’ Owoeye.

Some of the residents from the 15 villages in the community, said they were summoned to the court by the police to testify on the invasion and destruction of their homes on April 17, by thugs allegedly hired by the suspects.

The counsel of the residents, Mr Shem Popoola, who spoke on behalf of the protesters displayed a warrant for the arrest of Owoeye and one Ganiyu ‘Garba’ Owoeye that was issued on October 19 by a Wuse Magistrates’ Court, Abuja in suit No: IBK/FIB/FCIID/FHQ/ABJ/171/2016.

The warrant, Popoola, stated that it was issued following an October 5 petition to the Deputy Inspector-General of Police, Force Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department (FCIID), Abuja.



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