

THURSDAY 13 SEPTEMBER

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3 die, 10 arrested, vehicles destroyed as police, youths clash in Anambra

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By Nwabueze Okonkwo

ONITSHA—THREE persons were feared dead yesterday, while many others were arrested by the police at Awkuzu in Oyi Local Government Area of Anambra State when irate youths went on rampage in protest against last Tuesday's alleged killing of a youth by the police in the area.





File photo: policemen

Hundreds of youths in the area had gone on rampage yesterday, accusing the Police in the area of shooting and killing one of them who was a commercial motorcyclist and extorting money from others for riding commercial motorcycles beyond 7 p.m.

The state government, through the State House of Assembly had passed a bill few years ago prohibiting motorcycles from plying the roads in all parts of the state from 7 p.m to 6 a.m, a law which policemen in the state tried to enforce on daily basis.

According to an eye-witness, the Awkuzu youths had shortly after the death of their member on Tuesday, allegedly invaded the Oyi Divisional Police Station at Nteje and sacked all the policemen in protest against the death of their member allegedly chased to death by a police patrol team for riding his motorcycle beyond 7 p.m.

Youths on rampage

As if that was not enough, the angry youths regrouped early yesterday morning and embarked on a rampage by blocking all the roads leading into the community, thus disrupting vehicular movements and at the same time, smashing some vehicles belonging to unsuspecting victims who ran into them unknowingly.

The source further disclosed that it was in the process that a detachment of police team arrived the scene and in an attempt to disperse the rampaging youths, shot and killed two more demonstrators before the intervention of prominent personalities from the area, including the Obi of Awkuzu, Igwe Chibuike Ezeaganama.

One of the victims who identified himself as Mazi Chris Mocha, Director of Information, Biafra Independence Movement, BIM, told newsmen on phone that he was riding his motorcycle from Awkuzu to Ifitedunu when he ran into the angry youths and they used machete to cut his front and back tyres to pieces.

Irate youths attack commissioner

Mocha noted that he escaped unhurt by the whiskers, as he abandoned the damaged motorcycle along the road, adding that he even saw the youths attacking a prominent indigene of the area, Uchenna Okafor who is the State Commissioner for Transport who came to mediate in the crisis, accusing him of being a signatory to the bill banning okada movement in the state beyond 7 p.m.

Igwe of Awkuzu, Obi Ezeaganama told newsmen that he had just succeeded in bringing the situation under control, adding that he had appealed to the youths to sheathe their swords against the police, adding that the youths told him that their grouse was that the police were capitalizing on the 7 p.m. okada ban to extort money from them daily, even when the time was not yet up to the stipulated 7 p.m.

Efforts to reach the State Police Public Relations Officer, PPRO, SP Haruna Mohammed through his phone proved abortive as he did not respond to calls put across to him.

A community leader, Chief Tony Jiendu who spoke to newsmen called on the police authorities to investigate the matter discretely and punish those found culpable from both sides.

Jiendu noted that since the matter had already taken lives, it should no longer be taken lightly.

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