

3 die, as fire razes Oyo Akesan Market

By Ola Ajayi, Adeola Badru & Tordue Salem

THREE persons reportedly lost their lives while protesting the late response of firefighters to a distress call made when fire gutted Akesan Market, in Oyo town in the early hours of yesterday.

According to a source, the three persons did not die in the fire incident but were reportedly felled by police bullets while showing their grievances over lack-lustre performance by the fire service in Oyo town.

Akesan Market is the main commercial centre in the ancient town.

According to information gathered, the fire which started around 1 a.m. destroyed many properties before it was put out.

The source said the fire started around 1 am but the Fire Service based in Oyo, which is just less than 20 metres to the market, could not mobilise to stop the raging fire.

"The fire service said its equipment was not functioning. Fire-fighters then had to be mobilised from Ogbomoso town, 50 kilometres away, after massive damage had been done".

"We condemn this failure of government service. But more concerned is the disproportionate use of force in response to angry residents, who were protesting at the gate of the fire service near Akesan in Oyo".

"Ogbomoso fire-fighters are



The ruins of Akesan Market, Oyo State, after the fire, yesterday. NAN PHOTO.

currently fighting the fire and we hope it is stopped before further damage is done."

"We sympathise with our people, particularly men and women trading at Akesan. It is a sad way to start the year."

According to the Secretary of Oyo Global Forum, Mr Taiwo Hassan Adebayo, "In due course, we will be demanding that Oyo State Government should compensate the traders and

rebuild the market, while also enforcing stricter safety standards across the state. We will also not allow the police to get away with the killings in Oyo".

A witness said, "three persons have now been killed but the police have left with the remains of one."

But a source, who was not authorised to speak, denied the killing of the three persons.

Several calls made to the Police

Public Relations Officer, SP Gbenga Fadeyi, were not picked.

But the Oyo State chapter of the All Progressives Congress, APC, yesterday, told Governor Seyi Makinde to be proactive in his approach to the occurrence of natural disasters.

The party added that it was very unfortunate Governor Makinde, who was always out to be counted as the lover and defender of the masses when he was in the

opposition whenever such natural disasters struck in the past, has now found it difficult to empathise and commiserate with the victims of repeated inferno in the state.

APC in a statement by its Publicity Secretary, Dr Abdul-Azeez Olatunde, urged the Oyo State Governor, Seyi Makinde, "to find a way of giving palliative to the victims of the inferno through Oyo State Emergency Relief Management Agency (OYSEMA) and henceforth provide for the consumables needs by Oyo State Fire Services, to be effective in their obligatory duties."

"Also sensitisation advertorial should be rolled out and placed across all the media channels in Oyo State to salvage the rest of the Harmattan Season and forestall further occurrence," it advised.

Meanwhile, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Femi Gbajabiamila has sympathised with the government and people of Oyo State over the fire incident in Oyo.

In a statement by his Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Lanre Lasisi, the Speaker said he was shocked by the incident.

Gbajabiamila expressed regret over the early morning fire outbreak that claimed the means of livelihood of many traders.

"It is with a heavy heart that I received the news of the fire outbreak that gutted the popular ancient Akesan Market in Oyo."

"I commiserate with the victims of the fire for the disruption of their economic activities as a result of the unfortunate incident."

"Being a historic ancient market and very dear to the people of Oyo State, I also empathise with the Alaafin of Oyo, HRH. Oba Lamidi Adeyemi over the incident."

was lured to the den and killed.

Philip had told the police that he used the lady's heart to



Segun Phillips

on the instruction of the herbalist.

He said, "I lied to her that we were going to visit my uncle. I had earlier assured her I was

undergraduate's remains were found. He assured that the suspects would be charged to court after investigation.