

You killed our people and labelled them bandits, Ogun villagers tackle police

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Controversies continue to surround the killing of two persons the police described as bandits after they allegedly attacked some herdsmen in Saala Orile in the Yewa-North Local Government Area of Ogun State.

The police in the state through its spokesperson, Abimbola Oyeyemi, had described the two people said to be indigenes of the village as bandits.

Oyeyemi claimed that the bandits attacked the police while they were on a rescue mission to rescue herdsmen being allegedly attacked by the villagers at Saala Orile Forest.

According to Oyeyemi, the police led by the Divisional Police Officer, Ayetoro, CSP Bernard Edigboyan, quickly led his men and operatives of Joint Security Intervention Squad to the scene.

The police however lost one of its officers, an inspector identified as Omolayo Olajide. But findings by our correspondent on Friday showed that there was confusion over the identity of the slain villagers.

Some villagers who spoke with our correspondent on Friday said the persons killed were farmers in the village.

Residents of the area including a human right activist, Kunle Garb, raised concerns over the killings and branding of the dead indigenes of the village as bandits.

They faulted the statement of the police which described the victims as bandits.

The villagers under the auspices of Yewa North Patriotic Forum insisted that those the police shot dead were hunters who were indigenes of the village.

Contrary to the police claim, the group through its spokesperson, Ganiyu Fatolu, claimed that some herdsmen grazed their cattle on farmer's farmland.

He added that the grazing infuriated the farmers who called for help from the hunters. According to him, on sighting the hunters, the herdsmen immediately attacked them and the farmers.

He maintained that the herdsmen called the police for rescue after the hunters overpowered them.

The forum demanded that the police should retract the terrorist appellation on the slain farmers, describing the police statement as fabrication.

The statement partly reads, "It is a deliberate fabrication by the police to tag innocent villagers living within Ayetoro, Saala Orile, Erinpa and

neighbourhood as bandits. This obviously was done in a rush to cover up the unprofessional way its men handled the conflict at Saala Orile."

Corroborating the forum, Garb said the farmers were on their farms when the reinforcement of police and soldiers arrived at the scene.

Garb said, "The farmers were explaining to them that they were going to their farms. But in the anger that one of them (an inspector) had died, all explanations of the poor souls fell on their deaf ears.

"They were shot at close range by one of the policemen and killed instantly. One of them is Akanji from Ijaka-Oke who was going to his farm at Adekan. The police lied! They are not bandits. Our people are not bandits. We call on the Inspector General of Police to investigate this gruesome murder by his men and ensure the perpetrators are brought to book."

Contacted for his reaction on the matter, the police spokesperson insisted that the police killed bandits. Oyeyemi who was furious over the allegation said the police could not have killed their inspector.

He said "These people don't know what they are saying. An Inspector of Police was killed by the bandits and two of them were gunned down in the process. They are bandits. They were killed in a gun battle.