

Sit-at-home: 3 killed as traders protest shops closure in Enugu market

By Chioma Gabriel, Anayo Okolie, Dennis Agbo & Chinedu Adonu

•Armed hoodlums hijacked traders' protest —Enugu govt •Police confirm killing of 2 officers in Aba, as gunmen attack Abia Commissioner

TENSION heightened in Enugu State yesterday, following the alleged killing of three residents by an anti-riot police squad, which forcefully wanted to stop traders at Ogbete Main Market protesting the lock-up of 106 shops and two banks by the Enugu State Government, even as the Abia State Command of the Nigeria Police, also yesterday, confirmed the killing of two of its personnel in Aba, by yet to be identified gunmen.

The Enugu traders were protesting against the sealing of their shops by the state government for their compliance with last Monday's sit-at-home order, issued by the Finland-based Simon Ekpa.

The traders said they were afraid to come to the markets because there was no visible security personnel from their different areas to embolden them to come out.

It was also learnt that many other traders sustained various degrees of gun injuries.

Recall that the Enugu State government, on Monday, sealed the shops of traders who did not open their shops on Monday.

An eyewitness narrated that the aggrieved Ogbete traders were protesting peacefully in the market environment, over the illegal sealing of their shops, before the police intercepted them and started shooting in the air.

According to them: "We are angry. To open shop is not by force. State Government should leave us alone to do our business."

One of the traders, popularly known as Lasisi, told our correspondent that "they have been shooting and killing people in the market here. The traders started protesting here because those whose shops were closed, because of the sit-at-home, were asked to pay money before their shops will be reopened. They said they will not part with any

money and that was how the protest started.

The protesters started making bonfires on the roads and the police moved armoured tanks into the market, started indiscriminate shooting and killing people. Some got bullet injuries and others got different forms of wounds. Tears were being shed and pandemonium ensued," he narrated.

In a bid to douse tension and maintain peace, the police deployed armoured personnel carriers around the market and other strategic locations.

In a statement later, the Police Public Relations Officer, PPRO, Daniel Ndukwe, said that even as he did not have a comprehensive report on the matter, normalcy was returning to the market and that the police were still there to maintain peace.

"Normalcy has been restored at Ogbete Market Enugu and its surroundings, following the report of protest by some traders over the sealing of their shops by the State Government and their attempt to force others, whose shops were not sealed, to close theirs and the entire market closed. The initially peaceful protest was hijacked and made to become violent.

Traders in the market and citizens alike have been pleaded with to remain law-abiding, peaceful and cooperative, while using approved channels to express their grievances.

"Full-scale investigation has been initiated on the orders of the Commissioner of Police, while further development, especially as it concerns reports of casualties being circulated, will be communicated as soon as possible, please," Daniel Ndukwe, the command's spokesman, said.

In his reaction, former Chairman of the Enugu Capital Territory Development Authority, ECTDA, Dr. Josef Onoh said that he was among the people that tried in the last dispensation to dissuade the Enugu residents from complying



•Mohammed Bala Mustapha...Abia State Police Commissioner.



•Ahmed Ammani...Enugu State Police Commissioner.

with the sit-at-home order but were unsuccessful.

Onoh however gave credit to Governor Peter Mbah's administration for his fight to ensure that the sit-at-home order is not complied with again in the state, alleging that political opponents of the government were probably sabotaging the state Governor's determination.

"Peter Mbah's efforts against sit-at-home are being sabotaged by some political elements in the state. He has shown more interest in combating the menace of sit-at-home and has brought to purview the financial loss the state is incurring in the futile exercise. Sadly, some political characters and some that lost their elections are using the sit-at-home to frustrate Peter Mbah," Onoh alleged.

Armed hoodlums hijacked traders' protest

—Enugu govt

However, the Enugu State Government has reacted to the protest by Ogbete Market traders, which led to the reported killing of three persons.

It said it was working to unravel the circumstances behind the incident, as well as the reported casualty.

The government's position was contained in a statement signed by Professor Chidiebere Onyia, Secretary to the State Government. He said, "The Enugu State Government received with grave concern the ugly incident at Ogbete Main Market, Enugu, today.

"Information available to the Government shows that traders whose shops were sealed for non-compliance with Government's order banning Monday sit-at-home, defied the instruction on how the shops should be reopened and resorted to self-help by removing the seals.

"This led to internal squabbles between the market leadership and some of the affected traders. The ensuing confrontation resulted in a protest, which was infiltrated and hijacked by dangerously armed hoodlums and miscreants, who broke shops and looted traders' wares.

"Attempts by security operatives to restore order and

prevent further looting were violently resisted by the imported and armed hoodlums. Government is receiving further briefings on the development.

"In the meantime, investigation to unravel the circumstances surrounding the incident, including the reports of casualty, is already ongoing.

"Government calls on the people and residents of Enugu to remain calm and go about their lawful businesses, as adequate security measures are in place to secure lives and property in the State."

Police confirm killing of 2 officers in Aba, as gunmen attack Abia Commissioner

Police Public Relations Officer of the Command, ASP Maureen Chinaka, said that an Inspector and a Constable were killed by the gunmen who attacked the convoy of the Abia Commissioner for Trade, Commerce and Investment, Dr. Chimezie Ukaegbu, Tuesday evening.

The incident which occurred at Samek Junction which connects the Ariaria International Market, caused serious panic, as traders that occupied the area have all deserted the place as of Wednesday morning.

The PPRO disclosed that the incident occurred at 4 pm on Tuesday.

However, Vanguard gathered that as of Wednesday morning, peace is yet to return to the area, as soldiers and policemen have been arresting residents of the power line, Samek, and adjoining areas.

"A distressing incident occurred at SAMEK, located near Faulks Road in Aba. A group of hoodlums launched an attack on the convoy of the Commissioner for Trade, Commerce, and Industry during the honourable commissioner's familiarization tour to markets in the Aba metropolis.

"The convoy was en route to Ekoha shopping plaza when the armed assailants opened fire. Regrettably, amidst the chaos, two police officers lost their lives in the line of duty."

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
OSUN STATE OF NIGERIA
(PROBATE DIVISION)

WHEREAS the person's whose names are set out in the second Column of the said schedule date and the place mentioned therein

AND WHEREAS the person's whose names and address set out in the second Column of the said schedule along (wherever found necessary or expedient) with the particulars of their relationship to the deceased have applied to the High Court of Justice, Osun State of Nigeria for the grant unto them of letters of administration in respect of the and/or personal property of the said deceased.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the said Letters of Administration will be granted to the said Applicants unless a notice of prohibition such grant is filed in the Registry of the High Court of Justice, Osogbo, Osun State of Nigeria within twenty-one (21) days from today.

SCHEDULE

DECEASED
1. DR. OLUROMINIYI OMONIYIBITAYO
Late No. 3 Ademoroti Street, Oke-Opo, Ife, Osun State who died on the 2nd day of June, 2023 at Ife

2. BLESSING OZIOMA MUOKA
Late of Tinumola Area, Osogbo, Osun State who died on the 14th day of April, 2023 at Ife

3. PAULINA AYODELE ADENLE
Late of No. 5 Adenle Street, Oke-Ira, Ogbu, Lagos State, who died on the 17th day of August, 2022 at Lagos

APPLICANT FOR GRANT.
1. Mrs. Adepoju Julianah Ibitayo and Mr. Olufermi Ibitayo c/o Their Solicitor, Chief A.O. Olawale & Co., Legal Practitioners, E297, Ita-Ofa Street, Beside Bello Gas, Ife, Widow/Son of the said Deceased

2. Evaristus Ugochukwu Muoka and Chinwendu Maureen Udemgba Both of Tinumola Area, Osogbo, Osun State, Husband/Sister of the said Deceased
3. Adenle Adeola Oluwatoyosi of No. 5 Adenle Street, Oke-Ira, Ogbu, Lagos State, Daughter of the said Deceased

DATED 27th DAY OF JULY 2023
OMISADE F.I.
PROBATE REGISTRAR