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Over 100 people killed and property destroyed in the clashes

The leader of a Nigerian militant organisation blamed for instigating the recent ethnic clashes in Lagos was on Friday charged with conspiracy, murder and arson.

Frederick Fasheun, leader of the Odua People's Congress (OPC), was charged along with 41 others in the main magistrates' court of Yaba district in Lagos.

The charges carry a maximum penalty of a death sentence.

No plea was taken and all those charged, including one woman, were remanded in custody.

More than 100 people were killed in the clashes earlier this week between local Yorubas and Hausas.

Heavy security

Security was tight as the accused were taken to court.

Heavily-armed police stood guard around the district, and no one other than journalists and court officials was allowed into the court building.

Mr Fasheun, who was wearing an orange traditional robe, pleaded with watching crowds, shouting "please rescue us" in Yoruba.

The OPC, a vigilante group established in 1995 supposedly to fight for the Yoruba people, has been accused of involvement in a series of clashes in Lagos since democracy returned to Nigeria last year.

“
Please rescue us
”
OPC leader, Fasheun

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Over 200 suspects were arrested by police in connection with the Lagos violence after the government on Wednesday banned the vigilante group and ordered the arrest of its leaders and supporters.

Reprisals



Thousands of Hausas fled to military barracks for protection

Reports say Hausas in some northern cities were continuing to seek refuge in army barracks because of fears of reprisals.

Clashes broke out on Thursday in the northern city of Minna, but police say calm has been restored.

President Olusegun Obasanjo, who has described the Lagos ethnic violence as madness, dispatched five of his ministers from the north on a peace mission to the region.

Security was also stepped up on Friday in several northern cities to ensure calm after Islamic Friday prayers.



Fasheun: Charges carry death sentence

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