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Youth dies as police disperse mourners

22 FEB 1985 By Chris More

An unidentified youth aged between 11 and 14 died yesterday when police fired rubber bullets and tearsmoke to disperse about 8 000 mourners at the funeral of last week's unrest victim in Seisoville, near Kroonstad.

The youth was rushed to Boitumelo Hospital in a police van, but was certified dead on arrival.

Later, police came back in a van to collect the body. The sheet over the body was covered in blood around the area of the head.

Four other mourners were admitted to the same hospital. One, a woman who said she had been carrying an infant on her back when police fired a rubber bullet in her direction, was bleeding profusely from the ear as doctors attended to her in the casualty department.

Another woman lay unconscious on a hospital bed as doctors battled to resuscitate her after she had been overcome by tearsmoke fumes.

The mourners were attending the funeral of a 17-year old youth, Andrew Makoko, who died from head injuries suffered during last week's unrest. He was buried at the Stilfont Cemetery, about 1 km from Seisoville.

On Monday, another victim, Joseph Matches (17), was

buried at the same cemetery and police interrupted the service by firing tearsmoke and rubber bullets at mourners.

The police, who had been watching proceedings from a distance at the cemetery yesterday, advanced on the mourners at about 11.20 am as they were leaving the graveyard for the home of the bereaved.

The police fired tearsmoke and rubber bullets and then charged the mourners with batons and sjamboks. The crowds scattered in all directions with police hot on their heels.

At the home of the bereaved, police arrived and dispersed hundreds of people who were to have attended a ceremonial lunch. Many said they were still waiting to wash their hands in accordance with custom when the police rushed at them.

A community leader and United Democratic Front activist, Mr Dennis Bloem, said the action of the police "was provocative and senseless". He said a magisterial order restricting the funeral service to only two hours had been handed to the Makoko family earlier and that when the police started firing, the time limit had not been reached.

"It appears the police hate peace. Everyone involved in the arrangement of the funeral did their best to obey the law so we could finish in time. But there was more than 30 minutes left when the police attacked us," Mr Bloem claimed.

FREEDOM SONGS

A police spokesman said a group of about 1 200 mourners had gathered at the home of Andrew Makoko at about 10 am and moved to the cemetery "singing freedom songs, waving banners and giving black power salutes".

The funeral finished at 11.30 am whereupon a group of about 2 000 barricaded the entrance to the township.

Police ordered them to disperse. They fired rubber bullets and used teargas to disperse the crowd.

The crowd broke up into groups of about 160 and attacked police vehicles and personnel with stones and catapults.

More rubber bullets were fired and teargas was used and the crowd finally dispersed.

When the crowd moved away an unidentified 14-year-old boy with a serious head wound was left behind.

He died in the Boitumelo Hospital shortly afterwards.

Another 14-year-old boy and two women, aged 21 and 22, were treated at the hospital for minor injuries.

No arrests were made, the spokesman said.

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