Police seal off Edo NLC secretariat

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Labour inaugurates Monday Igbafen Caretaker Committee for state  
  
Operatives of Nigeria Police Force have sealed off Edo State Secretariat of Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), otherwise called Adams Oshiomhole Labour House.  
  
Similarly, the main gate of University of Benin (UNIBEN) was beefed up with police personnel.  
  
Suspected thugs were seen loitering at the secretariat.  
  
A police armoured personnel carrier was deployed in the secretariat.  
  
Heavy security at the Labour House and UNIBEN main gate was to bar inauguration of the Caretaker Committee of Edo NLC.  
  
But the inauguration was held at another venue in Benin City and Prof. Monday Igbafen was sworn in.  
  
It was gathered that NLC leaders had gathered at the UNIBEN ASUU Secretariat for the inauguration, but put it off due to security report.  
  
Some NLC leaders from neighbouring states, who were scheduled to attend the inauguration at the Labour House, expressed regret that they could not access the secretariat.  
  
Comrade Augustine Igben from Maritime Workers Union said he was embarrassed when he was not allowed entry into Edo Labour House.  
  
“I felt embarrassed about the whole thing. How can the police barricade Labour House when there is no war? It is a labour issue. They should allow Labour to settle the issues themselves.  
  
“I was not allowed entry. Where am I going to pass through? There were lots of security personnel. I also saw some civilians mixed up with them.”  
  
The leadership crisis rocking Edo State chapter of NLC deepened yesterday, as its national leadership inaugurated Prof. Igbafen as chairman of the Caretaker Committee to oversee the affairs of Edo NLC.  
  
But Comrade Bernard Eguakhide insisted that he remained the interim chairman of NLC in Edo State.  
  
The inauguration of Prof. Igbafen was scheduled to hold at the secretariat of the Edo NLC at Ikpoba Slope, but the secretariat was sealed off by security personnel.  
  
Prof. Igbafen and the Inauguration Committee led by Comrade Oluwole Adeleye moved to the Secretariat of Academic Staff Union of Universities at the University of Benin, but security report made them to relocate to another venue where the inauguration was conducted.  
  
Speaking at the inauguration, Comrade Oluwole said the intervention in Edo NLC affairs was to sanitise the union.  
  
Oluwole said it was not acceptable for Comrade Eguakhide to make himself chairman of Edo NLC without the knowledge of the national body.  
  
He said: “We are aware of what is happening in Edo NLC since last year. The former chairman was involved in political activities. Ordinarily, it was the vice chairman that was to take over, but we were surprised the auditor took over and announced himself as the chairman. It is unacceptable.  
  
“We called them for a meeting and we realised everybody is selfish. Everybody wants to be chairman.  
  
“We are also unaware of the activities of the government. We are law-abiding citizens.”  
  
He urged the Caretaker Committee to bring all members together and reunite Edo NLC.  
  
‎Comrade Egwuaghide said he emerged as caretaker chairman of the Edo NLC after 43 affiliate unions gave him their nod.  
  
He accused the Comrade Joe Ajaero-led national NLC leadership of causing trouble in Edo NLC by flouting Edo State House of Assembly resolution.  
  
‎According to him, “from the directive and the letter sent by the national secretary, it stated that they are coming to inaugurate a committee. We have been here since morning. Other workers have been here.  
  
‎‎”We have not seen anybody that comes into this place to inaugurate any committee. So, we feel there is nothing that has happened again.  
  
‎‎”In all, I, Comrade Egwuakhide, remain the authentic chairman of Edo NLC.”  
  
‎‎Reacting to reported plans to inaugurate the Caretaker Committee inside UNIBEN, the institution’s management said it was averse to the use of the school’s facilities in its two campuses for any political or union event, including meetings and rallies without approval.  
  
It directed officials overseeing its facilities not to entertain any request or application for the use of such facilities for purposes inconsistent with the mandate of the university as an academic institution.  
  
Spokesman for the institution, Benedicta Ehanire, in a statement, urged leaders of staff and students unions in the university to avoid any gathering not approved by the management.