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In the latest violence to rock the town of Timika in Papua Province, at least four people were wounded on Tuesday after police allegedly opened fire during a mass protest sparked by the death of a man said to be shot by a policeman during a weekend bar brawl.

Hundreds of protesters, some armed with machetes and other crude weapons, took to the streets after hearing news of the death of Simon Fader, who was allegedly shot in the stomach during a fight between off-duty officers and local tribesmen early on Sunday at a city bar. He later died on the operating table.

“The enraged men carried Fader’s body to the police station demanding the arrest of the rogue officer” who allegedly shot him, Cornell, a Timika resident who witnessed the violence on Tuesday, told the Jakarta Globe by telephone.

He said Fader’s body was later taken to his home, but by then more protesters had joined the rally in front of the police station, blocking adjacent roads.

Hundreds of policemen were then deployed to stop the protesters from breaking into the station. Amid the chaos, officers fired into the crowd, according to AFP. A number of people were hit by bullets, which further enraged the crowd.

“At least 10 shots were fired by the police,” Cornell said. “The protesters fled but many were beaten and then arrested.”

The protesters then rioted at a nearby market, looting and destroying hundreds of shops and burning the market’s police post.

Timika Police Chief Godhelp Cornelius Mansnembra said on Tuesday that the situation was under control.

“We have arrested several rioters who we suspect to be the leaders of the riot,” he said. “We have urged others to stay calm and not to take the law into their own hands.”

Police have yet to charge anyone with the killing of Fader, Mansnembra said.

“We are still investigating the incident,” he said. “We still do not know who is responsible.”

Witnesses to Sunday’s shooting told investigators that Fader, for unknown reasons, was in a brawl with several police officers when gunfire erupted, but Mansnembra, without elaborating,

said their statements had been ruled out.

The National Human Rights Commission has been monitoring the Timika police because of numerous cases of officers as well as military personnel allegedly shooting civilians, many of which remain unresolved.

Last year, a 40-year-old man was shot and killed while attending a festival said to have been linked to the outlawed Free Papua Movement. Police have so far failed to declare any suspects or state whether police were involved, saying further investigation was needed.

Pro-independence sentiment in Papua has increased in recent years, fueled in part by discontent that profits from its natural resources are being siphoned out of the province with the assistance of the central government. US-based Freeport McMoran Copper and Gold Co. operates mines in Papua.

Indonesian police open fire on Papuan protesters: witnesses

2 hours ago

TIMIKA, Indonesia (AFP) — Four people were injured Tuesday when Indonesian police opened fire on hundreds of people in Papua province during a protest against alleged police violence. Officers began shooting when about 300 angry residents armed with homemade guns, machetes and wooden stakes tried to break into a police post in Timika, on the southern coast of the rugged eastern territory, an AFP reporter witnessed.

At least four people were shot in the legs during the clash, in which migrants from the Kei islands in the neighbouring province of Maluku fired homemade guns at police in riot gear. Hundreds of protesters raged through the city after the shooting. They smashed windows at a journalist's house before being forced back into their neighbourhood by police.

Protesters threatened the journalist, Husein, with further violence if he reported on the day's unrest, he told AFP.

The violence was fuelled by anger over the death earlier Tuesday of Timika resident Simor Fader, also from Kei, who was allegedly shot by police on Sunday during a scuffle in a bar. "Police should investigate this shooting incident," a protester told AFP.

Timika police chief Godhelp Mansnembra has denied police shot Fader and has launched an investigation.

The local police commander of the city's Mimika Baru neighbourhood, Jasim Hoda, said "a number" of protesters had been taken into custody for questioning.

Angry mob storms Timika

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A gathering of hundreds of people, many wielding machetes, which started as a protest over a police officer's alleged fatal shooting of a resident, turned into a riot, damaging buildings in Timika, Papua, on Tuesday afternoon.

The mob destroyed a bar in Sempan, sacked the Swadaya Market and set fire to a nearby police post. Shop owners along Jl. Yos Sudarso and Jl. Cendrawasih closed their businesses Tuesday morning.

The rioters took turns carrying on their shoulders the body of Simon Fader, who had died from gunshot injuries earlier in the day. The family is accusing the police of have shot Simon during a bar fight in Timika on Sunday.

Hundreds of police have been deployed to guard the Mimika Baru police station. Police fired warning shots when the mob headed toward the station.

Mimika Police chief Adj. Sr. Comr. Godhelp Cornelis Mansembra said the police were investigating the shooting incident.

"We don't know who fired the gun [Sunday night]. Simon took a ricocheted bullet in his stomach," he said, as quoted by tempointeraktif.com.

Witnesses reported Simon was shot during a scuffle at Queen Bar on Jl. Ahmad Yani. Several police officers were injured in the brawl. (dre)