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Bloody poll in Bayelsa as 6 die, others injured

By CHINEDU WOSU in Yenagoa

04 April, 2010 03:33:00

image Gov. Sylva Timipre

At least six persons have been confirmed dead and scores of **others injured** at Ekeremor local government area of **Bayelsa** State as rival groups clashed, killing six during the local government election conducted by State Independent Electoral Commission BYSIEC.

The victims, *Sunday Champion* gathered were killed by a suspected militant group loyal to an opposition party in the area who stormed the voting center and hijacked materials.

Also speed boats delivering electoral materials to Nembe Community are reported to have capsized at the coastal area, no casualties have been officially reported.

Our correspondent also gathered that suspected militants hijacked electoral materials at Ekeremor amid sporadic shooting injuring scores of electorates waiting to cast their votes.

The election started late in Yenagoa as electoral materials were yet to be distributed as at 10am while security agents deployed to the state condoned-off most of the streets restricting movement of people and vehicles.

At Kpansia market in Yenagoa, policemen were seen dispersing local traders from the weekly market and forced them to go home and cast their votes.

The state council polls were marred with high level of apathy and crisis as residents of the city were seen going about their normal business with polling units begging for voters.

Speaking to newsmen on why traders were chased out from Kpansia Market, Divisional Police Officer (DPO), B, Yenagoa, Mr. Nemi Iwo, an Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) said he is acting on directive from above.

Iwo told journalists that the state government announced that every electorate should go to the **poll** and exercise their franchise rather than selling and buying during voting hours.

Hear him, "the traders know that today is election in the state and therefore, they are not supposed to sell in the market".

Commenting on the crisis at Ekeremor, Commissioner, Media and Publicity BYSIEC, Mr. Tom Egba while confirming the incident said he received a phone call on the killing and said four persons were seriously **injured**.

Egba also denied reports that a speed boat delivering electoral materials capsized at Nembe adding that he is in constant touch with the electoral officers in the area.

He insisted that, there is no social disorder in the state, and that Council elections in all eight local governments were peaceful despite some pockets of mischiefs.

In Yenagoa, The Commissioner for BYSIEC said there was no case of hijacking of electoral materials, no shooting and voters queued up to cast their votes for candidates of their choice.

Contacted on phone, Police Public Relations Officer, **Bayelsa** State Police Command, Mr. Omomien Solomon, an ASP confirmed that four people lost their lives in the incidence.

He also said, the Command is yet to be official briefed on the electoral violence in Ekeremor and decried the state of social disorder in the community.

Cross- section of voters in Yenagoa who spoke to our correspondent described the election in the state as a failure.

The voters who spoke on condition of anonymity said they were denied the right to exercise their franchise as election did not take place in the city till 3pm.

Mr. Peter Kalio, an Okada rider who spoke to *Sunday Champion* said he was surprised to hear that Bayelsans are voting today (yesterday) adding that there was nothing to show that election was taking place in the state.

According to him, BYSIEC is yet to deliver electoral materials to wards and units, and that there are no materials for voters.