

FOCUS ON POLITICS

How election turned violent in Buhari's base



General Buhari trying to calm protesters



Voters on rampage in Daura

Last Saturday's presidential and parliamentary elections turned violent in Daura Local Government Area, the home base of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) presidential candidate, General Muhammadu Buhari. Two people were reported killed (though police said only one person was killed), several others injured and eight houses, including that of former speaker of the Katsina State House of Assembly Sani Sa'idu Fago were burnt.

Thousands of people went on rampage when they discovered that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) sent inadequate presidential ballot papers to allegedly deprive them of voting for their kinsman. There were also alleging that many Ghana-must-go bags were discovered filled with ballot papers thumb-printed for the ruling People's democratic Party (PDP).

Their candidate, Buhari, a leading opposition candidate is competing with a fellow indigene of Katsina State, Governor Umaru Musa Yar'adua, the presidential candidate of the PDP.

But for the prompt intervention of General Buhari who pressed on the protesters to allow peace to prevail, Daura would have become another wild zone during the conduct of the presidential election.

Daily Trust gathered that elections did not hold in most parts of the local government area as a joint-patrol team of military and police dispersed the electorate and took over the major streets of the area.

BBC Hausa Service yesterday reported that curfew had been imposed on the local government shortly after the unfortunate incident, restricting movement of the

From Yusha'u Adamu Ibrahim, who was in Daura

people in the night.

The violence erupted shortly after the commencement of the election when the electorate realised that the shortfall in the supply of the ballot papers by INEC to the area was allegedly over 40,000. Some polling centres did not get voting materials at all.

Eye witness accounts showed that the angry youths carried sticks and iron bars and headed to the INEC office requesting for the balance of 40,000 ballots papers. Immediately they arrived at the office, eye witness said, the protesters began to vandalize available objects they found in the office including the glasses of the windows and the solar system facilities.

An eyewitness said: "All the policemen attached to the INEC remained helpless when the aggrieved youths stormed the office and begun to vandalise it. I am sure if the police had reacted, there would be human casualties."

He further stated that it was the intervention of the ANPP presidential candidate that saved the situation; otherwise the damages would have been worse. Daily Trust gathered that no fewer than eight houses were burnt to ashes in the local government area. Our correspondent learnt that the personal residence and a timber shop of the former speaker of the state House of Assembly, Alhaji Sani Sa'idu Fago, were among the places set ablaze by the angry protesters.

Furthermore, a 12-year-old beggar, simply called Kamalu, sustained an arrow wound following a counter attack allegedly launched by youths brought by a PDP chieftain at



Prof. Maurice Iwu, INEC Chairman

various polling centres in Daura, Sandamu and Zango local government areas of the state.

According to Daily Trust investigations, the eight residential houses affected in the earlier attack belonged to some personalities including a PDP chieftain, Alhaji Umaru Margel.

Our correspondent who went round Daura town learnt that other affected residential buildings are that of Alhaji Aminu Jammo, Alhaji Aminu Manzo and former chairman of Sandamu local government, Alhaji Sani Sabo as well as those of Margel's son and brother. Daily Trust further learnt that dozens of people sustained serious injuries after they were attacked with bow and arrows by what ANPP supporters described as hired thugs known as "Yankalare" allegedly deployed by a PDP chieftain to disrupt the elections in Daura, regarded as Buhari's stronghold.

A Toyota "first lady" model carrying two Ghana-must-go bags stuffed with ballot papers and thumb-printed in favour of PDP was allegedly impounded by the police at the Daura-Katsina roundabout. The driver of the car was said to have been pursued by some aggrieved youths from Zango local government area of the state.

The shortfall in the supply of presidential ballot papers to Daura was one of the major issues of contention.

General Buhari told our correspondent that from the information he had gathered the shortfall for Daura local government was 40,000 ballot papers, saying that Daura was supposed to have 96,000 presidential ballot papers, but was supplied with only 56,000. The ANPP presidential candidate also explained that he called the INEC Resident Commissioner in charge of Katsina State several times through his mobile phone, but he refused to answer his

calls.

Our correspondent, however, gathered that it was the intervention of General Buhari that doused the tension at the INEC local office after he addressed the youths through the public address system; otherwise the office would have been set ablaze by the aggrieved youths.

Buhari told the crowd that "it is not this action that will give me victory in this election. Therefore everybody should go back to his polling unit and cast his vote. This is what will give me victory in this election."

After persuading the crowd to leave INEC office for their various polling centres, General Buhari headed for his polling unit at Kofar-Maruf where he cast his vote some minutes after 11 am.

Police authorities in the local government area confirmed the burning of eight houses as well as the arrest of two people in connection with the vehicle impounded with ballot papers, saying that investigations were being intensified to fish out those behind the act. Those arrested, police said, were the Information Officer of Zango Local Government Area, Mallam Bala, and a former councillor of the same local government, Mallam Adamu Mato.

The Divisional Police Officer in charge of the Daura central police station, Suleiman Iki, confirmed that some arrests have been made in connection with the Daura violence.

"We have made some arrests but I cannot ascertain the exact number of people we have so far arrested because I was just back from a joint operation between police and military. Even while we are on patrol, more people were brought to the station,

so you see I cannot give you the exact number now," he told Daily Trust.

Suleiman further explained that "if not because of our immediate intervention, the story would have been different by now, but nevertheless the situation is now under control."

The DPO added that, although there was no loss of life in Daura during the incident, several people sustained various degrees of injuries. However the state commissioner of police, Dan'Ajumi Doma, yesterday told Daily Trust one person had been killed during the Daura violence.

He also disclosed that another two people had been killed in Yantumaki area of the state due to election violence.

There were allegations of widespread rigging throughout the state during the elections. A coalition of opposition parties has already announced the rejection of the election in the state even before its results are declared. At a news conference addressed by ANPP governorship candidate, Alhaji Abu Ibrahim, attended by the leaders of the other opposition parties, they alleged massive electoral fraud and said they would not recognise any results announced by the electoral commission.

On his part, the PDP presidential candidate, Umaru Yar'adua, who is the governor of the state, said he was satisfied with the conduct of the Saturday's elections in the state. Up to the time of filing this report, results were still being awaited in the state.

However, results of the senatorial election in the state have been released. The ruling PDP has won all the three seats, says the electoral commission.