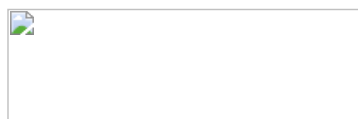


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ELECTION VIOLENCE: GUNMEN KILL PDP CHAIRMAN, 2 OTHERS IN EBONYI



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Three persons were shot dead by yet-to-be identified gunmen few hours before the Governorship and House of Assembly elections in Ebonyi State Saturday.

The victims included the Chairman of the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) in Ishielu local government area of the state, Mr. Emeka Nworie, a middle-aged man, Mr. Mike Ojor in Ikwo Nnoyo in Ikwo local government area and another victim yet to be identified.

Our reporter was reliably informed that the gunmen are suspected to be thugs loyal to a popular opposition political party in the state.

The late Nworie was said to have been attacked in his house at Ezzagu, Ishielu LGA at about 3am Saturday and shot severally by his assailants on different parts of his body until he died.

The Police Public Relations Officer in the State, ASP Chris Anyanwu, who confirmed the killing, said the assailants before shooting the PDP stalwart, had asked for money which was given to them but they still murdered him.

Reacting to the pockets of violence in some parts of the state, the PDP deputy governorship candidate, Mr. Kelechi Igwe condemned the development adding that such acts were instigated by the opposing political parties who knew very well that they had already lost the elections.

But the Governorship candidate of the Peoples' Democratic Party, Engr. Dave Umahi attributed the violence in the state to desperation, alleging that Governor Martin Elechi's pre-election broadcast on Wednesday caused the violence experienced during the election.

Umahi, who is also the Deputy Governor of the state, expressed optimism that he would emerge victorious despite the violence that erupted in Ebonyi Central senatorial zone.

But an aide to the governor who pleaded anonymity said Umahi was being economical with the truth of the situation, insisting that Elechi's speech couldn't have contributed to the violent crisis when it did not contain any element of incitement. "May be Umahi did not listen to or understand the speech," the aide remarked.

However, collation of votes in Ebonyi state was in progress by press time as reports from different parts of the state indicated that the exercise was peaceful.

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