

One Killed, Late Voting

FROM ABIODUN FAGBEMI, ILORIN

ONE person was feared dead yesterday at Babalonma, Ifelodun Local Government Area of Kwara State, while several others sustained gunshot wounds when people identified as political thugs attempted to snatch voters' boxes, but met the stiff resistance of the electorate and law enforcement agents in the area.

Babaloma is identified as the stronghold of the governorship candidate of the Action Congress, in the State, Senator Makanjuola Ajadi.

Feelers of a likely outbreak of violence in the area were received three days to the elections when some people tagged "key men" of some politicians were allegedly arrested and detained by the police.

The dead man was allegedly shot by the soldiers on duty.

At Offa, two ballot boxes were recovered from a living room at Popo Market area of the town, where they were being stockpiled with thumb-printed voting papers.

The presiding officer in the area, Risikat Shoyemi, said, as voting was on, some miscreants invaded the polling centre with clubs and started beating up innocent voters. They later made away with the ballot boxes.

But a team of mobile policemen later recovered the boxes.

Late arrival of voting materials marred the exercise at Idofian, Omupo, Otun-Oro Agbam, Omido, Omu-Aran and Offa.

The governorship candidate of the Democratic People's Party (DPP), Gbenga Olawepo, said the late arrival of voting materials was a deliberate attempt to disenfranchise voters.

State governor, Dr Bukola Saraki expressed his happiness with the large turn out of voters and "the peaceful conduct of the election."

INEC Resident Commissioner in the State, Ayo Adakeja, said INEC did not envisage most of the complaints, adding that electoral materials were distributed earlier enough to prevent such complaints.

House of Assembly to presidential. I am impressed and I am happy that I am part of it."

On the matter of some ballot papers bearing the name of Ugwu, he said: "What I heard was that some ballot papers contained photograph of Ugwu. What we were told is to vote for PDP, umbrella. It doesn't matter, what matters is PDP."

Ohakim the PPA candidate regretted that the electronic system that was promised by the INEC was not applied during the voting exercise.

SOKOTO

Massive Turnout

FROM AZIMAZI MOMOH, SOKOTO

MASSIVE voter turnout characterised yesterday's gubernatorial and State Assembly elections in Sokoto State. As early as 8.30 am, voters were seen in many parts of Sokoto, the State Capital, in very long queues waiting for the officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to arrive with voting materials.

But in a few polling stations especially in Sokoto North Local Government Area, there were complaints of omission of names of registered voters from the voters' register. The peace that characterised the elections in the state suffered a setback in Shagari Village where a presiding officer was beaten by angry voters for trying to hide the voting materials including the ballot papers, which he had already collected from the INEC office in Sokoto.

Security was very heavy as a team of mobile policemen and soldiers were seen parading many parts of the metropolis especially those areas where trouble was expected. The Sokoto State police commissioner, Malam Shehu el-Othman who spoke with journalists on the level of security preparations for the elections, stated that the peaceful atmosphere was recorded by the resolve of his men to stay away from partisan politics.

"You see, we have tried very much to be very neutral. It will be a very big mistake for any Police officer to be caught involved in partisan politics. This is part of the lecture I gave to my men before the elections."

From IFEDAYO SAYO, ADO EKITI

ELECTORATE in Ekiti State had tales of woes to tell in the governorship/house of assembly elections, which was massively rigged with the active collaboration of security agencies.

In many communities visited by *The Guardian* yesterday, voters were not only denied the opportunity to cast their votes, hoodlums led by some notable individuals and accompanied by mobile policemen snatched ballot boxes at gun point and took them away to unknown destinations.

In some of the communities where attempts were made to resist the stealing of the ballot boxes, people were either shot or attacked with dangerous weapons.

ONDO

Ten Feared Killed

FROM NIYI BELLO, AKURE

YESTERDAY'S poll in Ondo State was marred by violence, with not less than 10 people feared killed.

Eye witness account said four were killed in Ikare-Akoko; two in Akure, the state capital; one in Akungba Akoko and two in Ile Oluji. Except for the two that were killed in High School area of Akure, the others were felled for allegedly trying to snatch ballot boxes.

The elections also witnessed other forms of irregularities, ranging from late arrival of materials to voting centres, intimidation of voters and general insecurity.

At Okitipupa, voting materials did not arrive until around 9.30 in the morning.

In Alaje, voting did not start until around 2pm, because some youths alleged that the list of INEC staff were changed overnight. A detachment of soldiers was drafted to the police.

Prominent politicians, including Aderemi Olatubora, the publicity secretary of Labour Party in Ondo State and Dele Olatunji, the candidate of Labour Party in the House of Rep election, were arrested on the eve of the election.

The two were arrested by soldiers and detained at Okitipupa Army Barracks.

At sacred Heart Cathedral unit, the presiding officer, who resisted the attempt to carry away his ballot box, was matched and taken away to an unknown destination. One of the vehicles used by hoodlums is a Golf car marked Lagos BX 251 JJJ.

In Owo, a member of the Ondo State House of Assembly, Abayomi Ode had his official Peugeot 403 destroyed by an irate mob who accused him of trying to carry away their ballot boxes.

In Akungba-Akoko, two vehicles were destroyed by the youths, who said the occupants of the vehicles came out of the house of the former speaker of the State House of Assembly, who is also a contestant in the election with already stuffed ballot boxes.

In Idanre, there were pockets of violence, resulting into the death of three persons suspected to be hooligans who attempted to carry away ballot boxes.

The Labour Party candidate, Olusegun Mimiko expressed disgust at the shoddy preparations made by INEC and the intimidation of voters by the police.

But the police spokesman, Adeniran Aremu said he had no report of any death.

NIGER

Accord Party Wants Cancellation Of Election

FROM JIDE ORINTUNSI
AND NKECHI ONYEDIKA, MINNA

ACCORD Party in Niger state has threatened to call for the cancellation of both the governorship and House of Assembly elections in the state, following the outright omission of the party's name and logo as well as pictures of its candidates on the ballot papers by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

The party's flag bearer in the state, Senator Isa Mohammed disclosed this to newsmen in Minna shortly after protesting the development to the INEC State Resident Electoral Commissioner, Alhaji Hassan Suleiman.

According to Mohammed, who had to rush to Minna to complain about the development from Bida, his picture was conspicuously missing from the ballot paper. Smelling a rat, Mohammed said that the development was "a deliberate ploy to deny him victory at the polls."

He also complained of the outright omission of the party's name and logo, as well as the names and pictures of the 27 candidates for the

state house of assembly on the ballot papers meant for the elections of the legislatures.

Mohammed who was visibly disturbed by the development, noted that the non-printing of his picture on the ballot paper was to confuse his supporters, adding that, reports reaching him revealed that his supporters were told that he had withdrawn from the race, hence the removal of his picture from the ballot paper.

"My people have been disenfranchised; they have not been allowed to exercise their civic rights," he said, adding, "Everybody in Niger state are aware that I will win the election. I have been a Senator twice and this particular election I was supposed to win it by a score of over 80 to 85 per cent, because all the youths and all the commoners are with me but what is happening now looks like a planned work."

Mohammed who also complained to a team of international observers at the INEC office in Minna said, "if INEC fails to cancel the election, we may consider the option of going to the election tribunal to call for the cancellation of the election."