

During March and April 2007, convoys of supporters of both the PDP and AC candidates were attacked by those believed to be *Kalare* gangs in the east of the state. On one occasion six cars were burnt and one child was killed in a clash at Deba.³³⁷

One woman, a broadcast journalist who was intending to run as a PDP candidate for the State House of Assembly, Balanga constituency in 2007, was threatened by *Kalare* youths in August 2006 after purchasing her nomination forms from the PDP party. She told Human Rights Watch that:

Kalare came to my house in Gombe town. Four of them were armed with machetes, and they asked me to withdraw my candidacy or face the consequences. They knocked at the door, I opened, they pushed me inside. They said I am not the governor's candidate.³³⁸

After a further threatening phone call several days later, she decided not to enter the race.

Election Day Abuses

On Election Day, *Kalare* members played an integral role in the efforts of the PDP to rig the polls. According to a report by a local observer group, the Network for National Stability, *Kalare* members were seen snatching ballot boxes from polling stations to prevent voting in nine wards in Gombe state during the state polls. Local observers from the Network identified and named many of the individuals involved in intimidation and stealing of ballot boxes in their report on the elections.³³⁹ The ANPP reported to INEC and the police that voters had been chased away and ballot boxes snatched by *Kalare* gangs in every Local Government Area in the state.³⁴⁰

³³⁷ Human Rights Watch interview with District Police Officer, Talasee, Balanga Local Government, April 21, 2004.

³³⁸ Human Rights Watch interview, Gombe town, April 24, 2007.

³³⁹ Network for National Stability, "Observation Report of Gombe State 2007" April 16, 2007, on file with Human Rights Watch.

³⁴⁰ Letters to INEC National Chairman, Maurice Iwu, from ANPP Gombe State Secretariat, Gombe, April 14th and 16th 2007, copies on file with Human Rights Watch.

International observers told Human Rights Watch that they witnessed the same kinds of abuses as those reported by local monitors. IDASA political violence monitors in Gombe reported seeing an INEC official stopped by a *Kalare* roadblock and threatened. He and his car were doused in petrol but the match they tried to use went out, leaving the monitors time to intervene and get the man out. The boys then forced the IDASA monitors to signal their support for the PDP before they allowed them to drive off.³⁴¹

Human Rights Watch witnessed *Kalare* thugs driving around with machetes in Balanga, Deba and Gombe towns. In the vote collation center in Gombe town, Human Rights Watch witnessed three thugs men wearing PDP campaign paraphernalia surrounding a lone INEC staff member who was trying to complete his results sheet for his polling station in the INEC office (already a violation of established procedure, as the sheets are supposed to be filled in and signed at the polling station). The three men, who had surrounded the official at his desk, shouted at him because he could not make the figures tally to include extra numbers that they wanted him to include. The handwritten sheet the INEC staff member held showed a majority for ANPP in one color ink. However, another figure adding over 200 votes had been added in red in the PDP column. This was the figure that finally made it into the official results form.

Once the form was filled in by the INEC officer, the *Kalare* members left the office and Human Rights Watch asked the officer about the discrepancy between the two colored inks. He said that the number in red reflected another ballot box that his colleagues had not considered. However, when pressed, he was unable to identify the colleagues in the room.³⁴²

Many of those who attempted to stand up for a free and fair election in Gombe suffered reprisals, meted out by alleged *Kalare* members, sometimes in the presence of the police. Abubakar Yunus, the ANPP Senatorial candidate for Gombe Central Senatorial District said that when he witnessed *Kalare* members stealing ballot boxes in Kumo town, he and his supporters surrounded the vehicle carrying the

³⁴¹ Human Rights Watch interview with IDASA monitor [name withheld], Gombe town, April 22, 2007.

³⁴² Human Rights Watch interview with INEC polling clerk, Gombe Local government office, April 21, 2007.

stolen materials and called the police. The police escorted the car to Kumo police station, but a senior police officer on duty then allowed PDP party agents to take the ballot papers away. Yunus told Human Rights Watch that when he protested, the PDP supporters beat and kicked him, “in full view of the police who did nothing, they simply watched.” He alleges that, among other *Kalare* thugs, his assailants included Ismail Muazu Hassan, the Gombe State commissioner of rural development.³⁴³

A 21-year-old student who accompanied his grandmother to vote in the gubernatorial election described to Human Rights Watch how he was assaulted when a group of *Kalare* members supporting the PDP candidate overheard him suggest that she vote for the opposition Democratic Peoples Party (DPP):

On Saturday at around 10am I went to vote on Haruna street with my grandmother. She asked me for advice on who to vote for. When I told her the DPP, the *Kalare* boys there started cutting me with their knives. They started beating me. The police came. They did not stop. The police just watched. I tried to run away. When I ran they started to stone me but they did not follow me.

The boy’s grandmother was unharmed. When he later went to report the incident to the police, they did not take any written report. An officer escorted the boy to the hospital and the police reportedly took no further action.³⁴⁴

The results of Gombe’s elections were predictably one-sided. PDP candidate and incumbent Governor Muhammed Danjuma Goje was awarded more than 985,000 out of 1,083,862 votes reportedly cast (about 91 percent), according to INEC. His nearest competitor, Abubakar Hashidu of the DPP, won just 3.5 percent of the vote.³⁴⁵ Goje

³⁴³ Human Rights Watch interview with Ahmed Abubakar Yunus, ANPP Senatorial candidate, Gombe central, Gombe town, April 23, 2007 and confirmed by Elders Forum, Election Report, Human Rights Watch interview with Suleiman Kumo, April 24, 2007.

³⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch interview with victim [name withheld], Gombe town, April 20, 2007.

³⁴⁵ 38,030 votes, according to Vanguard: Jimoh Babatunde, “Street Fighting and Mayhem Precede Elections in Gombe,” VG, May 4, 2007.