

Violence, Delayed Voting Trail Polls

• **56 Feared Killed** • AC In Early Lead In Ekiti, ANPP In Oyo, PDP In Osun • 'Adedibu Under House Arrest' • **Alao-Akala's Aide Nabbed With Pump Action Rifle**

By Our reporters

Violence, ballot snatching, and late arrival of voting materials marked the

governorship and state Assembly elections on Saturday. No fewer than 56 people had reportedly died nationwide by Saturday night, but the figure

could be higher.

A member of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Oyo State, Lamidi Adedibu, was put under house arrest in Ibadan by

police and soldiers to head off confrontations in the hotbed of South West politics.

Soldiers prevented mayhem

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HIGHLIGHTS

- 13 Killed In Rivers
- 13 In Ondo
- Nine In Edo
- Five In Osun
- Five In Benue
- Three In Anambra
- Two In Enugu
- One In Kwara
- One In Lagos
- DPO Killed In Warri
- Former Lagos Police Boss' Aide Dies In Car Crash
- Alao-Akala's Aide Nabbed With Pump Action Rifle In Ibadan
- Violence, Rigging Mar Voting In Oyo
- DPA Assembly Candidate In Lagos Caught With Ballot Boxes
- INEC Offices In Awka, Onitsha Razed
- Three Council Headquarters Razed In Anambra
- 10 Houses Burnt In Ebonyi
- EU Observers Express Concern Over Delayed Voting
- Soldiers Restrict Adedibu's Movement In Ibadan
- Thugs Hijack Voting In Abeokuta
- IBB Dissatisfied With State Of Affairs In PDP
- Obasanjo, Iwu Laud Conduct Of Polls
- Atiku Scoffs At It
- INEC Not Fully Prepared - Tinubu
- Elections Suspended In Four Councils In Delta, Two In Abuja
- Two INEC Officials Arrested In Abuja For Diversion Of Materials



• Soldiers in armoured personnel carrier patrolling the streets of Lagos... on Saturday

Obasanjo, Iwu Laud Elections

By Sule Lazarus (Yola), Adetutu Folasade-Koyi (Abuja), Emmanuel Nzomiwu (Enugu) and Femi Ogbonnikan (Lagos)

President Olusegun Obasanjo cast his vote at 9.45 a.m. in Ward 11 of Abeokuta North Council in Ogun State, then said "so far, so good. The situation in the country is satisfactory."

Fifty eight year-old Elijah Taiwo, a Pastor, the first to cast

his ballot in the ward, expressed happiness "to vote for the progress of the nation and my state," and enthused that "there will be no problem, things will go smoothly and peacefully."

Governor Gbenga Daniel, who is seeking re-election on

the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), was among the first to vote in Isoko Ward 6 in Sagamu, where others joined him in huge numbers.

Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)

Chairman, Maurice Iwu, calmed frayed nerves, saying plans are in place for a hitch-free exercise.

He told journalists in Abuja that he is satisfied as reports from all over the country showed little or no problems.

"Voting has been so far so good, with a few skirmishes here and there. People have been conducting themselves peacefully. We are very happy with the logistics and our surveillance system is working fine," he added.

He denied reports that materials were stolen in Enugu, but confirmed that "stifling security checks" in Lagos affected the early release of materials.

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• **Election Can't Be Free, Says Atiku**
• **No Voting In Enugu - Senate President**

Violence, Delayed Voting Trail Poll

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in the city but were unable to curb rigging and the stealing of voter's cards, ballot boxes, and invasion of polling stations by thugs suspected to be supporters of the PDP and members of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW).

Secretary of the Tokyo faction of the NURTW, Lekan Alesinloye, and the Secretary of Lagelu Unit of the union, Rasidi Oladele, were arrested.

Another suspect, Mukaila Lamidi, wearing a badge inscribed with 'Akala for 2007' was arrested with a pump action gun in a Kia Jeep marked 'Akala for 2007'.

Three teenagers, Adeniyi Abdulahi, Olusegun Akeem, and Tolulope Owonikoko, had earlier been arrested by soldiers who mounted road blocks at the Ojo end of the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway. They had in their possession two machetes, one military knife, and assorted charms.

The police rescued a middle aged man, Kamoru Asamu, who was about to be lynched by Tokyo men in the Ode Aje area of the city.

Soldiers also arrested Ganiyu Omatayo, his wife, Laide, and their son Oyindamola, who is about a year old.

Reports from other parts of Ibadan said Alao-Akala's Deputy, Taofeek Arapaja, led thugs loaded in buses to polling stations to pack ballot boxes.

The Alase area was sacked by thugs who carted away all ballot boxes; likewise in the Idi Ikan and Amunigun areas where a man in police uniform went away with the ballot boxes, and left the electorate waiting in vain to cast their vote.

Voting allegedly took place in the homes of two members of the state Assembly, Muideen Inakoji and Sakiru Fajimi, while Adedibu led his own convoy round the city before his house arrest.

Seventy people were arrested in Oyo with machetes and other dangerous weapons. Deputy Governor, Adebayo Alao-Akala, allegedly led the onslaught on polling stations in Ogbomoso, carting off ballot boxes.

Security operatives arrested a former Chairman of Oyo West Council, Fatai Obabiolokosi, in the Ojongbodu area with 40 rounds of live ammunition.

A Labour Party (LP) agent, identified as Wale Senator, who attempted to resist them, was shot in the neck by thugs and taken to hospital.

A crew from the Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo State (BCOS), led by Bimbo Akanbi, was manhandled in Ogbomoso by hoodlums.

One of the big flaws by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Lagos was the absence of the photograph of Democratic Peoples Alliance (DPA), Jimi Agbaje, on the ballot paper.

Agbaje bemoaned the attitude of the INEC, which he said did not complain to his office about the loss of his photograph. "That is the kind of country we have for you and it shows how serious we are with regard to handling a matter like this," he stated.

Besides, an unusual heavy presence of armed soldiers in combat fatigue sent shivers down the spines of many Lagosians.

Even with empty streets, the soldiers mounted road blocks across the state, and in particular,

in flash points, would not allow any motorist go past without a thorough search of the vehicle.

At the Old Toll Gate by 7Up in Alausa, about 20 soldiers mounted a block with spike nails across the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway and made all motorists take only one lane before diverting to the one on the right.

At the Berger Bridge end of the Third Mainland Bridge, another block was mounted with about 10 soldiers. There was one after the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and one before the Bar Beach manned by Army and Naval personnel.

Coming from Adekunle through Yaba was another, as well as on Ikorodu Road in Onipanu, under the pedestrian bridge in Ojota and at the popular Pen Cinema roundabout in Agege.

Lagos Action Congress (AC) governorship candidate, Babatunde Fashola, lamented that the presence of soldiers may have been responsible for the low turn out of voters.

He reiterated after casting his vote that the nation is not at war and an election does not need the kind of military presence witnessed in Lagos.

Otherwise, voting passed off peacefully in Lagos, where the streets in some areas were turned into football pitches by young men, who played all day and did not allow the ball to touch ground, as done in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

If the election was peaceful in Lagos it was not so in the Awori area of Ogun as voting was disrupted when police arrested Works Commissioner, Waliu Taiwo, for snatching ballot boxes

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from polling booths in Sango. He was later released.

At press time, the PDP had 1,001 votes, ANPP (416), AC (349), and NDP (59).

In Abeokuta, one policeman and others died during a scuffle in one of the polling booths.

Cases of ballot box snatching were so rampant in Ogun State that in Sagamu it took the vigilance of the people to avoid a repeat of such incidents in Ota and Ipokia.

With skirmishes reported in several parts of Ondo State, DPA National Publicity Secretary, Remi Olayiwola, called on Abuja to cancel the governorship election in the state because of irregularities highlighted by ballot box snatching, violence, and intimidation of voters, especially supporters of Olu Agbesua, the party's governorship candidate.

He said Olu Falae, DPA, National Chairman, has sent a petition to the INEC to cancel the elections.

Voting started late in most parts of Anambra. Besides, Onitsha had its own taste of crisis as youths burnt down INEC headquarters in the city because of the non-arrival of election materials expected to have been distributed by the officials who were nowhere to be found.

Youths also impounded a vehicle belonging to a former council chairman. They discovered electoral materials and result sheets in the car.

Voting did not take place in Agoloward, close to the residence of Governor Peter Obi, who insisted that there was no election statewide.

Three people were feared dead and three INEC offices in Awka North, Onitsha North, and Nnewi South Council

headquarters were burnt by hoodlums.

Police Commissioner, Oliver Osuchukwu, said three people were injured and confirmed that the council headquarters in Onitsha North and Awka North were torched.

In Nnewi Council, 21 buses were seized by security operatives when it was discovered that thugs were using them to convey electoral materials and result sheets.

The Action Congress African Political System (ACAPS), Peoples Mandate Party (PMP), Labour Party (LP), All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), Fresh Democratic Party (FDP) and All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA), and the (AC) all called for a new voting exercise, insisting that there was no election in Anambra.

In Edo, seven people were killed at a primary school on Siloko Road in Benin as they tried to snatch ballot boxes. Several others could not vote.

By 3.00 p.m., accreditation was still going on in the primary school, which was later burnt down. There was no ballot in Owan West Council.

There was report of killings of two persons in Akoko Edo.

It was generally peaceful in Ekiti amid tight security provided by troops. But there were minor skirmishes in Oye and Iddo Councils following the stuffing of ballot boxes by people who were, however, resisted by the indigenes.

Collation of results had begun at press time, with the AC leading in 12 councils and the PDP in one.

Gunmen killed four people and injured six in Buruku Council in Benue. One woman was killed in Guma Council.

Armed men abducted INEC officials at three polling centres in Gboko and Markurdi, and carted away the ballot boxes and voting materials.

Election did not hold in Tarka, Logo, and parts of Vandeikya and Buruku Councils. There was a heavy presence of soldiers in Gboko and Buruku.

Voting was still going on by 9.00 p.m. in Nasarawa.

Former military President, Ibrahim Babangida, a former Presidential aspirant in the PDP, admitted that all is not well with the party, wishing that it had gone into the polls with fewer crises.

He spoke after casting his vote in Sabon Gari, Minna, a walking distance from his Hill Top Mansion, in company of his wife, Miriam, and eldest child, Aisha.

Also in Minna, another former Head of State, Abdulsalam Abubakar, said despite his and Babangida's preferences the outcome of the elections would reflect the will of the people, and that as elder statesmen, both of them support all candidates.

There was violence in Rivers, where eight policemen were killed and a police station was torched. The Accord Party (AP) governorship candidate, Bekinbo Soberekan demanded the cancellation of the exercise in the state, due to irregularities.

At press time, the death toll over the elections included 13 in Rivers, 10 (Ondo), five (Osun), five (Benue), nine (Edo), three (Anambra), two (Enugu), one (Kwara), one (Lagos) and one (Delta).

INEC, UNDP Frustrating Us -TMG

By Oguwike Nwachuku
ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR

The Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) has alleged that the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as well as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are frustrating its efforts at monitoring the general elections.

TMG said that the attitude of the organisations towards its members who are supposed to be involved in monitoring the polls suggests a calculated attempt to keep the civil society away from the exercise.

TMG chairman, Innocent Chukwuma, made the disclosure on Friday in a chat with *Sunday Independent*, noting that the role of both INEC and UNDP was frustrating and embarrassing.

Chukwuma said: "They are making it difficult for us to follow the ballot during and after the election. And these are signs that there are attempts to manipulate the exercise."

"The commission has refused to accredit our members who are supposed to monitor the elections."

"We have no fewer than 10,000 members to monitor the exercise in the 36 states of the federation and Abuja. But INEC cannot boast of 1,000 badges and this is regrettable and frustrating."

Chukwuma said the implication is that TMG had resorted to asking its members to monitor the election only in areas

they registered as members, noting that the independent observers were also registered to vote as Nigerians."

According to the TMG chairman, for a state as big as Lagos, only 20 badges were released to the TMG just as similar figure was released for most of the states in the South West, South East, South South and even in the North.

"It is important that Nigerians and the world are alerted that since INEC cannot make available simply badges for independent monitors, the whole noise being made by the Commission on the availability of materials is but a charade," Chukwuma explained.

His words: "INEC does not have the materials, hence what it supplied to the states. So, it is a problem of material inadequacy, yet, the chairman, Professor Maurice Iwu, has been going about shouting about adequate and huge materials."

"Between INEC and UNDP, someone has some explanation to offer because the latter was contracted to print the materials for INEC under their so-called joint donor agreement."

"Therefore, if independent observers did not get simple badges to discharge their own role effectively, then there is a problem."

Although, Chukwuma maintained that the game plan was to frustrate the TMG, the members have resorted to follow the exercise despite all odds.

Obasanjo, Iwu Laud Elections

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But after voting in Yola, Vice President, Atiku Abubakar, stressed that the election could never be free and fair.

"I have made my comment and that is that," he stated, adding that he would reserve further remark until he receives information from other parts of the country.

Atiku arrived Ajiya ward polling unit at 10.20 a.m. in company of Action Congress (AC) Adamawa governorship candidate, Ibrahim Bapete, Police Commissioner, Aloysius Okorie and other security officials.

Voting in Fufore, Girei, Yola North and South, Demsa and Mayo Belwa Councils was peaceful and the turn out large.

Unlike in previous elections, there were no complaints of shortage of materials and late arrival INEC officials.

After casting his vote in Ajiya ward, former Governor of old Gongola State, Bamanga Tukur, commended the INEC for an orderly conduct and timely take off of the exercise; unlike Senate President, Ken Nnamani, who called for a fresh election in Enugu after waiting in vain for three hours in his Amehi Awkunanaw ward to cast his vote.

Nnamani declared that no voting took place in Enugu State, citing the absence of officials of the INEC and voting materials statewide.

His words: "As at 1.30 p.m. that I'm talking to you now, there is no polling officer in my area. I got to the polling unit and there was nothing there. I saw large crowds of people waiting to vote and I also joined them to wait for the officials. I had to leave when people also dispersed. There was no voting at all in my area."

However, the election began peacefully in Damaturu, just that the process was very slow. Military and police personnel patrolled the streets and Police

Commissioner, Kelvin Opoke, said everything was going on well.

In Edo, voters in Auch showed enthusiasm as they reported at polling centres as early as 8 a.m. Election materials also arrive early.

Election began well in most polling centres in Katsina, even though some units experienced late arrival of materials.

Former Head of State, Muhammadu Buhari, who is ANPP Presidential candidate, voted at 9.15 a.m. in Daura.

Katsina Governor and PDP Presidential candidate, Umaru Yar'Adua, cast his own ballot at 11.30 a.m. in Katsina.

The exercise began late in Nasarawa; in contrast, there were large turn outs in Bauchi where it took off early - and Police Commissioner, Aminu Yesufu, said he had received favourable reports.

Reports from Sokoto said voting commenced smoothly about 9 a.m. The logistics were good and voters conducted themselves in an orderly manner.

But, in Maiduguri, voting did not start in most of the city's polling centres by 9.00 a.m. Although there was a large turn out in most centres, INEC officials were absent.

Election materials were distributed to all the 17 councils in Abia. Voting began at 9 a.m., apparently due to the late arrival of INEC officials and the materials, which were also dispatched to the 13 council headquarters in Ebonyi only a few hours to voting.

Ebonyi Resident Electoral Commissioner, Maria Owi, said the vehicles ferrying the materials were accompanied by security men to ensure their safety.

Enough temporary staff were recruited to handle the elections, she added, but lamented that most of them failed to turn up for training.

The materials had not been received by polling officials in Abakaliki council by 9.30 a.m.