

# One Violence Too Many In Kano

## LG Poll: What Next?

By Augustine Madu-West and  
Madu-Jerry Nmeribeh, Kano

The war of words that raged between the two big rivals in Kano political landscape - the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) few days to the November 17 council polls in the ancient commercial city has become a pinch to what had become of the state after the exercise.

But what never crossed the mind of many was that the Kano council poll would turn out so brutal - bloody, devastating and horrific - an experience that has been described by pundits as the worst in the political history of the volatile state. It appears shocking that a state that produced one of the major forces of Nigeria's political revolution, the doyen of northern politics, late Aminu Kano, became a war zone since last Saturday.

Aminu, a leader of the defunct Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU) and Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), through out his life fought for the cause of the common man (the *Talakawas*). He remained a hero and great leader even after his death. He never used violence to achieve political relevance. He is one name that has traversed all political affiliations, groups and ideologies in Kano politics and the North in general, so much that every saleable political entity in this part of the country uses his name and political ideology as pay-off.

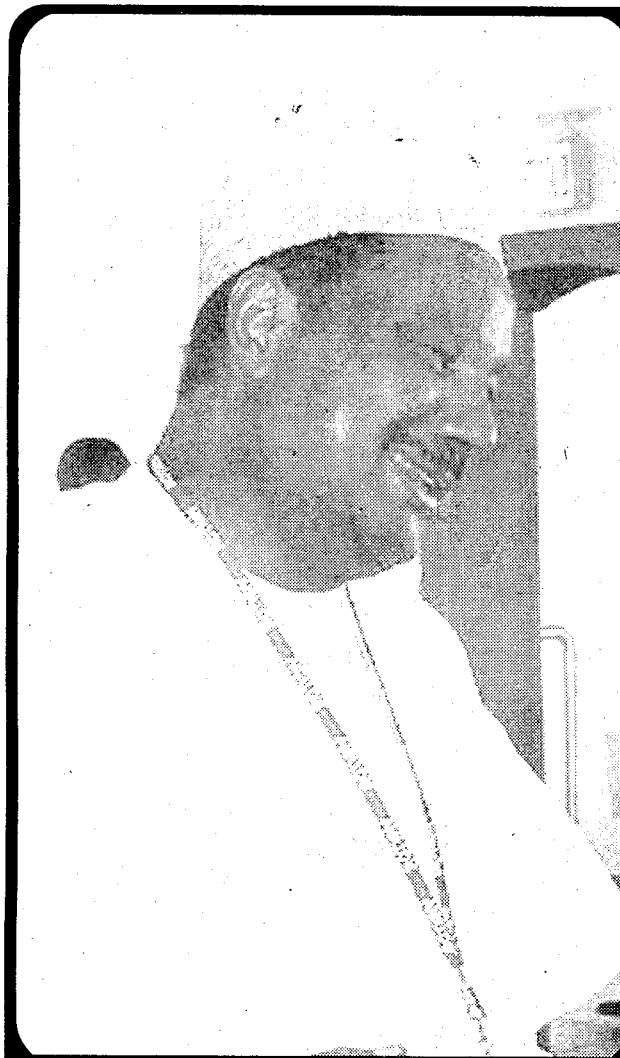
But Kano, regrettably, took dangerous steps into the gloomy paths of the nation's political recklessness during and after Saturday's council polls. Less than one week to the election, the two major political parties participating in the exercise, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) were pointing fingers at each other, alleging plans to cause chaos and perpetrate malpractice during the exercise. While the PDP leadership, in a press briefing, accused the ANPP of conspiring with the Kano State Independent Electoral Commission (KANSIEC) to rig the election, ANPP in its own briefing, alleged that the PDP has concluded plans to bring in thugs from Jigawa and Katsina states, "with the intention of disrupting the exercise."

PDP's state chairman, Senator Masu'd El-Jubrin Doguwa said KANSIEC, "is the appendage of the Kano state government and that the commission is working in collaboration with the ANPP to rig us out. The ANPP has also trained thugs with the intention of intimidating us and this is a dangerous trend in Kano politics. We have notified security agencies on this development."

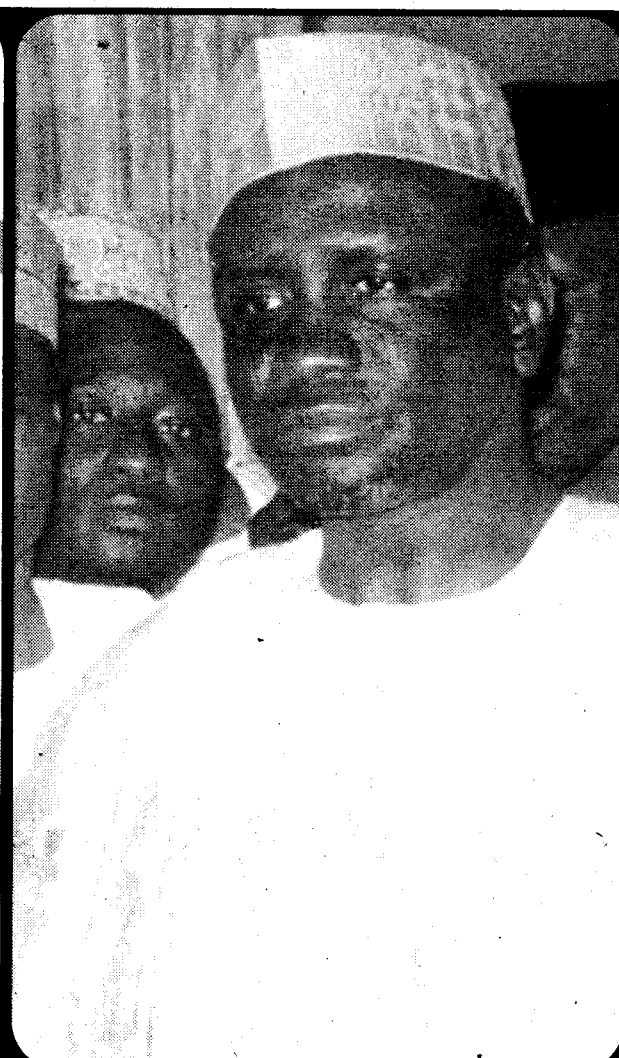
The PDP boss insisted that the party had no confidence in KANSIEC, "going by the way and manner it is



•Azazi



•Rimi



•Shakarau

conducting its activities without due consultation with our party, the PDP."

He alleged that KANSIEC distributed ballot boxes to local government areas without consulting the party, adding that, "in most local government areas, KANSIEC distributed ballot boxes that are more than the number of units. For example, in Doguwa Local Council, we have 117 units but KANSIEC sent about 135 ballot boxes to the area. "We know that the materials are in two segments: sensitive and non-sensitive materials, but the rules provide that we must be consulted before such materials are distributed. We are not comfortable with such activities and we demand explanation from KANSIEC." According to Doguwa, PDP gave KANSIEC 48 hours to furnish it with a breakdown of the number of ballot boxes so far distributed, provide their serial numbers as well as convince the party that the number of ballot boxes distributed tallied with the number of polling units in the state. The party also alleged that KANSIEC distributed sample ballot papers without notifying it, "and we insist that the ballot papers must be distributed with the statement of result sheet. We will not accept anything less than the conventional sharing formula," Doguwa said.

The PDP boss also said the party was not comfortable with the way and manner KANSIEC and the police were handling issues pertaining to the election. "It is normal that before elections are held in the state, security agencies such as the police organise a parley where they will rob minds with political parties so as to put things straight and ensure a hitch-free exercise, but to our surprise, the police have not called any such meeting. KANSIEC has met with political parties only once and this is not how it is supposed to be. Some of the suggestions we made at the meeting have not been taken into consideration up till now," Doguwa protested.

But KANSIEC, in a swift reaction,

refuted the allegation and insisted that it was ready to conduct free and fair polls. "We are surprised to hear that the party (PDP) is making these frivolous and unbelievable allegations against a body that has been in regular contact with the party leadership. We have been informing all political parties involved in this exercise on our activities," said the commission's chairman, Aliyu Tijjani.

The KANSIEC boss told journalists in his office that the commission had no intention to be partisan in its activities, adding that the distribution of the ballot boxes was done in good faith. "You know that these ballot boxes are serialised; how then is it possible to distribute more numbers than needed. In fact, all these allegations marvel me and they are not factual. Let me also make it clear that up till this moment, I don't even know the colour of the ballot papers because they have not been brought to Kano yet. They are still in custody of the Nigerian Security Printing and Minting Company and we intend to pick them three days to the election," Tijjani explained, and urged the PDP and other political parties to desist from "unwarranted propaganda and concentrate on how to ensure a free and fair exercise."

"We have less than one week to the election and we reiterate our promise to be fair to all parties involved," he assured.

Also reacting to PDP's allegation, the ANPP state secretary, Rabi'u Bako, said he was not surprised at the action of the PDP, "because PDP is finished in Kano and they know they have already lost grip of Kano politics." He added that ANPP's state central working committee had mapped out strategies on how to achieve a landslide victory, "just like we did in 2004. He also accused the PDP of making plans to import thugs from Jigawa and Katsina states, "with the intention of causing confusion; we have alerted the police, the

Immigration department and other relevant security agencies to take note of this plan to cause commotion."

In response to the growing war of words between the 'two elephants', the Kano state Commissioner of Police, Mohammed Yesufu summoned a meeting of the executives of state and local council of all the political parties participating in the election. It was a big gathering as the Bompai state police headquarters conference hall was full to the brim. Though the state's executive council of the ANPP was not represented at that parley, chairmen of the party in most local councils attended. Doguwa, was at the meeting. Yesufu told leaders of political parties at the meeting that, "it is not going to be free for all; we can not allow free movement on that day. Let me see how you are going to carry your machetes and cutlasses."

The police boss scheduled another mandatory meeting with the chairmen and secretaries of the political parties. According to the police boss, "the tones of the two letters coming from both camps (ANPP and PDP) are the same. The PDP is accusing ANPP of planning to cause chaos and mayhem during the election, and the ANPP in their letter equally made the same allegation. From my left, I see a letter from the PDP; from my right, I see a letter from the ANPP, making the same allegation against each other. I am not a new man in Nigerian elections. From what we have on ground, this election will be the freest and fairest ever recorded in Kano state," Yesufu assured. Contrary to rumours that some politicians were mounting pressure on the commissioner to redeploy divisional police officers to certain areas in their favour, Yesufu said, "no one has approached me for that purpose; and if that is what was obtainable here before I came, you should expect the contrary because in this job, I have handled elections and I have never compromised my integrity. We have not made up our mind on redeployment; and I will not oblige anybody requesting for police

redployment. I am going to do my work diligently and with integrity, nobody can buy me over," said Yesufu. At the second meeting that was held 24 hours to the election, the police cautioned the parties.

On the eve of the election, what was glaring was the heavy presence of police and other security agencies at the nooks and crannies of the state, particularly, within the metropolis. Tijjani invited journalists at 2 p.m., a day before the election (Friday) and briefed them on when and how the sensitive materials made for the exercise were going to be moved. He said KANSIEC would first supply local councils in the hinterland before those within the metropolis. "We have enough security; these materials are to be stored under lock and key; and the keys would be in the custody of the police," Tijjani said.

KANSIEC started moving the materials at 3 p.m., on Friday. The situation was still calm on Saturday morning, the day of the election. There was restriction of movement. People were seen doing their morning chores and nothing suggested premonition of a befalling mayhem. At 9 a.m. two buses conveying members of the Nigerian Union of Journalist (NUJ) Correspondent Chapel left Radio Nigeria, Audu Bako road (the meeting point) for monitoring.

Pockets of violence and late arrival of election materials almost marred the exercise. Worse hit by electoral violence were Kura and Madobi Local Government Areas where party thugs snatched and destroyed ballot boxes. We also learnt that there was no election in Shanono Local Government as the PDP chairmanship candidate, Ubaidi Ahmed Shanono, said he withdrew from the exercise because, "they failed to release materials for the exercise." He told newsmen that he had already forwarded a petition to KANSIEC. Other troubled areas were Gwarzo, Kiru and Albasa local government areas where cases of abduction, bitter confrontation and snatching of ballot boxes were recorded. The confrontation in those areas was between party thugs loyal to the PDP and ANPP. Knives, machetes and other dangerous weapons were freely used in the attack over which the police and other law enforcement agencies had a tough time contending with. In Kura particularly, the police had to expend live bullets, shooting into the air to disperse the crowd which nearly turned the Kura police station into a war zone. In that confrontation that left people running helter-skelter, two party men lost their arms when they were attacked with machetes. Scores of party men from both sides sustained serious machete cuts. The district head of Kura (Hakimin Kura), Tijjani Abubakar, and members of his family fled his palace as party thugs numbering over 100 surged towards his traditional home in demonstration of their anger. The Kura situation was so bad that voting was completely disrupted with a number of ballot boxes destroyed in most of the polling units. Some of the officials of KANSIEC were sighted taking refuge in the police station. According to the Sole Administrator in charge of Kura council Isa Umar, the exercise started peacefully in the area, "but we are surprised at what is happening now as hoodlums invaded polling units, destroying election materials."

In Madobi, former Defence Minister, Dr. Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso's local government area, violence was also recorded. The NUJ Correspondent Chapel bus which conveyed newsmen monitoring the exercise in the area was attacked by the youth at a polling unit very close to Kwankwaso's country home. No journalist was wounded, however. All the polling units visited in the area were rowdy as party thugs loyal to the PDP and ANPP were daring themselves, struggling for supremacy.

The struggle was more between the former Defence Minister and his cousin, Ilyasu Kwankwaso who is the Commissioner for Rural Development in the Kano State Governor, Ibrahim Shekarau's government. Though there was no report of destroyed ballot boxes in that area, there was, however, the likelihood of manipulation and

•Continued on B15



•Continued from B14

maneuvering by the two strong parties (PDP and ANPP) in polling units where they had upper hands. The Sole Administrator of the council, Salisu Bala, however, said the turnout was impressive. According to him, since 1998, Madobi has not had an elected council chairman as violence had continued to mar election in that area. He added that about 263 policemen were drafted to the area to ensure security during the exercise.

Generally, the exercise did not start as scheduled as election materials could not reach most polling centres earlier than 11 a.m. In Sabon Gari area, our correspondent observed that as at 12 noon, election materials were yet to get to the polling centres from the Bagge Local Government Headquarters. The same situation prevailed in Taurani, Nassarawa, Dala, Gwale, Ungogo and Kano Municipal councils, all in the metropolitan Kano. However, the exercise was peaceful in Sabon Gari particularly as at 5 p.m., on Saturday. The turnout from what we saw was generally unimpressive. Shekarau returned to the state to cast his vote at the Ginjiyu ward in the Nassarawa Local Government Council at about 3 p.m. According to Special Adviser to the Governor on Inter-Community Relations, Chris Azuka, materials for the exercise arrived as late as noon in some units in Sabon Gari. He, however, added that the exercise was peaceful, "and that the turnout was encouraging."

At 8 p.m. on the election day, the state Shekarau had a brief chat with journalists at the Government House when he expressed concern over what he described as skirmishes that trailed the election. He also recounted how KANSIEC and security agencies had assured him of a hitch-free poll. His words: "from the briefing we got earlier from the state independent electoral commission, they assured us of adequate arrangement and provision of materials. They recruited all the staff they wanted to recruit, and from the part of the government, we have given them all the funding they require as per the submission of their budget. As far as the state government is concerned, the state electoral commission has been well funded and they have assured that they made proper use of the funding to provide all the required materials. Secondly, we also requested the security agencies to give us their briefing. We had the Security Council meeting. The police and the State Security Services (SSS) also assured us of adequate security arrangement. They had done what they call operational order, that is, the movement of their staff deployment and the rest. They had identified the flash points: areas where for some obvious security analysis they feel will require special attention. The commissioner of police assured us that because of the size of the state vis-a-vis the number of security men on ground, he requested the zonal command to grant him additional force from the neighbouring state and it was granted. We also thank the Inspector General of Police for granting the request of the commissioner for special deployment of additional mobile police who are usually under the central control unit at the police headquarters in Abuja. Security-wise, we were assured. All arrangements to ensure the security of the voting environment were put in place, according to the police."

"Thirdly, reports reaching me so far since the beginning of the day confirmed that the citizens responded to our appeal, they came out to vote. As usual, it is not surprise when you get complaint of delay in take off of the election, delay in the arrival of electoral officers or polling clerks. These have always been the usual complaints which do not necessarily call for alarm. You know, for reasons of security, some of the sensitive materials were distributed early in the morning; like the ballot papers. You cannot give polling clerks the ballot papers to go and sleep overnight. From the 3 p.m. on Friday, KANSIEC started distribution of sensitive materials to local government areas. Sensitive materials were secured at local government secretariats under police protection."

He confirmed cases of violence saying, "we have got few reports of skirmishes but this is being handled and the details has not come in because it is purely a police affair. "People engage in violence because of lack of proper discipline, lack of understanding of the democratic system and what democracy means and stands for. It is also a pity that during elections, some people do not recognise the reason they vote."

On a general note, Shekarau said: "I can score the council polls above average, the turnout was very impressive."

By Sunday afternoon, tension had started building up in the commercial city. The authentic results of the election were yet to be released. This followed bitter controversy between the leadership of the PDP and ANPP over the conduct of the exercise; they both disputed the perceived outcome of the election in most areas.

Former civilian Governor of Kano State, Abubakar Rimi, described the election as being characterised by "massive rigging, killing and confusion which is unacceptable to the PDP." Rimi alongside other PDP chieftains were spotted at the state police headquarters in Bompai where they lodged their protest. Rimi who led the group had insisted in their meeting with security chiefs because "the PDP is totally opposed to the results being announced," and that they will not accept such results. "To him, "even in areas where election never took place, results were



•Na'Abba



•Ali

## One Violence Too Many In Kano LG Poll: What Next?

announced and we of the PDP are not going to accept such result where our representatives have not signed the final result sheet of the election." He alleged that the PDP discovered that the returning officers who were supposed to announce the results at most local government areas left without doing so. "They didn't come; they disappeared, but after their disappearance, you hear the announcement being made on radio. This is what is happening which is, to us, very unfair and totally illegal and unconstitutional. It is not the proper way to announce election results, and we can not accept what is illegal."

Still on that Sunday, no fewer than eight persons were feared dead in different polling centres, especially in the rural communities where violence erupted involving party supporters and thugs believed to be loyal to the two rival parties. But the police in a press conference later in the day confirmed six: two in Bichi; two in Bagwai; one in Sumaila; and one in Dawakin Kudu.

Yesufu also said his men and officers arrested 254 suspects with pistols, dane guns, knives machetes and gallons of fuel. Our correspondent reported that there was pandemonium at the premises of the Federal Government college at Zaria road as police short into the air to keep hoodlums away from the school, especially the female hostel as they were said to be plotting to create confusion that will create room for them to unleash terror on the innocent students.

On Monday, accusations and counter accusations continued to trail the Saturday's council polls. There were still pockets of violence in some areas as party thugs made burn-fires on major roads. Prominent among them was the Kano/Bichi road where traffic was slowed down for several hours following a barricade of the road by the rampaging youth. Although no fewer than 10 lives were believed to have been lost in the political violence, police still insisted on six. The Kano state government, disturbed by the degree of violence that marked the council election and the attendant growing tension it was generating across the commercial city, described the incident as the handiwork of the enemies of the state. The state Commissioner for Information, Haruna Isa

Deden who spoke on behalf of the state government confirmed that some local council secretariats and government properties were torched in what he described as devilish thuggery. He, however, declined to name the affected councils and government properties set on fire, but confirmed that arson and physical attack on innocent persons were witnessed in local governments where results of election were being awaited.

We gathered that no fewer than eight local government council secretariats were said to have come under attack by party thugs who set them on fire and the government through the Information Commissioner said the dastardly act were perpetrated by, "evil-minded, unpatriotic and self-serving groups who were determined to call into question the much needed peace, tranquility and stability in Kano state." The government also alleged that the burning of other government properties and installations by hoodlums and other social miscreants were sponsored by, "faceless and aggrieved politicians," adding that it was illegal for party thugs to erect road blocks on inter-state highways and inter-local government routes. It lamented the burning of vehicles of innocent citizens and travellers in some of the areas affected by political violence. This and other developments, the government spokesman said, were unacceptable to the authorities, warning that no government would fold its arms and watch the peace and unity of the state threatened by hoodlums in the name of politics. "The general public is hereby warned that any further act of violence in any part of this state will not be condoned. This is a responsible government and we are determined to protect the lives and properties of our citizens," the government warned.

However, PDP leadership in the state also addressed journalists at the party secretariat same day and insisted that elections were inconclusive in 30 Local Government Areas, while there were no elections at all in eight councils. The PDP maintained that any result released in respect of the affected councils would not be accepted by it, adding that as a peace-loving party, it had written to KANSIEC to

appoint new returning officers, "for the purpose of collating and announcing the results from these areas."

The party, however, expressed regret over the outbreak of violence that trailed the election, but insisted that, "justice must be done, and we request that KANSIEC send their returning officers to collate results in these areas mentioned. We have notified the state police commissioner and he promised to provide security for the returning officers. Let those results be collated; if we lost, we will accept defeat. Our party believes in democracy. We do not foment trouble. Kano is our home; we have appealed for calm and peace," said Doguwa. He, however, said the party would head to court if KANSIEC fails to consider its appeal.

Later in the day (Monday), KANSIEC announced results of 28 Local Government Area with the ANPP clearing 25 councils, leaving PDP with three.

Tijjani, while announcing the result through a local Radio station, did not give names of the local councils won by the parties. He, however, said elections were cancelled in Bichi and Kura Local Government Areas, while in Albasu Council, the exercise was suspended. KANSIEC, according to Tijjani, "is critically looking into" elections in Nassarawa, Tarauni and Makoda Local Councils.

On Tuesday morning, when our correspondent visited the Sabo Bakin Zuwo road KANSIEC secretariat, fierce-looking and gun-tottering soldiers were in charge of the area. "There is nobody in that KANSIEC office. We arrived here this morning and the staff or whoever for that matter, is not allowed to go in," one of the soldiers told our correspondent. Motorists and pedestrians were barred from passing through the KANSIEC office. The movement of soldiers to the streets on Tuesday is seen as the response of Bukavu, headquarters of the 3rd Mechanised Brigade, to the growing tension in the commercial city, especially after the controversial results which favoured the ANPP were announced. The presence of soldiers across the state capital raised fresh anxiety that all may not be well with it. The soldiers were also seen on some major streets and sensitive government installations to prevent further damage to government properties. Obviously sensing that the huge presence of soldiers on the streets could be a source of anxiety among the residents, authorities of the Bukavu Barracks issued a press statement explaining why it was necessary to deploy its men to assist the police in enhancing security in the state as well as stop the spread of violence to any other parts that has not been affected by the violence.

In a one-page statement signed by the Public Relations Officer of the brigade, Sabiu Abba Wudilawa, a major, he said the soldiers were on the street following the crisis that erupted in some parts of Kano State after Saturday's election, "in which several lives and properties worth millions of Naira were lost. The military has been called upon by the government to assist the police to restore peace and order. The army is hereby calling on all law abiding citizens to go about their normal activities and not to panic over the presence of soldiers who are out to protect lives and properties."

The statement warned parents and guardians to keep their wards out of trouble, pointing out that anyone caught fomenting trouble would be dealt with ruthlessly.

But the strongman of Kano politics and a bigwig of the PDP, Rimi declared on Wednesday that the huge presence of soldiers invited by the Kano state government would not intimidate the PDP from protesting the conduct of the November 17 council election which gave victory to the ANPP. Rimi told *Sunday Independent* in an exclusive interview that the invitation of soldiers by the ANPP-controlled government was clearly part of the designs to protect the "purported" victory of the ANPP, won through massive rigging. "According him, "it is part of the political tradition to invite the military when election is massively rigged in favour of the government in power. So, as far as the PDP is concerned, the action of the Kano state government was in keeping with that undemocratic tradition. I do not see anything strange in Governor Shekarau asking the military to intervene in this situation because it has been the case when election results are rigged and declared illegally so that they could protect the illegally won victory. One thing remains, the military build up in Kano would not stop the PDP from its arrangement to protest the outcome of that election because results available to us did not indicate that the PDP lost the election."

Rimi insisted that electoral officers of KANSIEC deliberately refused to announce results at the respective polling centres, "but rather preferred to do that at the state Government House. Up till now, results in several local government areas were neither collated nor counted; and so, it is embarrassing to read in the papers that ANPP won in 25 local government area while the PDP won in three. Based on the results from our agents, we are well ahead of the ANPP." However, Azuka, maintained that the ANPP made a landslide victory at the council poll.

**So, as far as the PDP is concerned, the action of the Kano state government was in keeping with that undemocratic tradition. I do not see anything strange in Governor Shekarau asking the military to intervene in this situation because it has been the case when election results are rigged and declared illegally so that they could protect the illegally won victory. One thing remains, the military build up in Kano would not stop the PDP from its arrangement to protest the outcome of that election because results available to us did not indicate that the PDP lost the election."**