

# LG Polls: Three Killed In Enugu, Offices Razed In Edo

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Violence, apathy and boycott marred Saturday's local government election in five states governed by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). But the same exercise was reportedly peaceful in a sixth state.

The LG poll held in the South West states of Ondo, Oyo, Osun

- *Obasanjo, Daniel, Chime Commend Exercise*
- *Mimiko Celebrates Low Turn-out*

and Ogun. It also held in Edo and Enugu states in the South South and South East geo-political zones.

While three persons were reportedly killed in Enugu, offices belonging to some councils in Edo and those of the Edo State

Independent Electoral Commission were set ablaze.

The election into some of the 20 council areas in Ogun State was characterised by poor voters' turn-out, except in few wards, as ballot boxes arrived late at the polling

stations in Abeokuta, Ilaro, Ota and many parts of the state. Some officials of the State Independent Electoral Commission (OGSIEC) were seen observing siesta at busy hours of the Election Day.

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In the Asasin Polling Station of Ward 11 of the Abeokuta North Local Government, where former President Olusegun Obasanjo voted, electoral officers did not arrive till 10 a.m. There were very scanty voters there, but one electoral officer claimed that no less than 50 persons voted before mid-day. Obasanjo arrived at the polling station at 12:19pm and voted at 12:25pm.

The turn out was, however, impressive at Mokola Ward Five, where Minister of Mines and Steels, Sarafa Tunji Ishola voted.

The polling stations were manned by combined teams of policemen, immigration officers and the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC).

Obasanjo, Ishola and Ogun State Governor, Gbenga Daniel, thumped up the conduct of Saturday's local government elections, describing it as peaceful.

They gave the commendation just as the Coalition of Political Parties in Ogun State, notably the All Nigeria's Peoples Party (ANPP) and the Action Congress (AC) described the elections as a farce.

Obasanjo told journalists the elections were peaceful. He advised the emergent local government chairmen to place emphasis on the development of their areas.

After voting at Isote ward at Sagamu around 10a.m, Daniel said the elections were peaceful. He commended the state's Independent Electoral Commission for ensuring a hitch-free exercise.

In Oyo State, former governor, Lamidi Adesina has called for the immediate cancellation of the local government elections in the state. Adesina said what took place at the weekend fell short of what could be called an election in any civilised society.

The man popularly called Lam described as unfortunate that some PDP leaders in the state who do not believe in democracy have decided to bring the administration of Governor Adebayo Alao-Akala to shame with the conduct of the council poll.

But Alao-Akala praised the people of Oyo State for their orderly conduct during the elections into the 33 LG areas.

Akala, who spoke through his Special Adviser to the Governor on Public Communications, Dotun Oyelade, said that the all-

inclusive procedure adopted by OYSIEC preparatory to the election was largely responsible for the peaceful and credible nature of the election.

PDP chieftain, Lamidi Adedibu described the council polls as the freest and fairest in the political history of the state. He spoke with newsmen after casting his vote at Peoples Girl's Grammar School, Molete, Ibadan in the company of the state Deputy Governor, Taofeek Ararajo.

There was low turn out of people during the council polls, as only politicians and their supporters were seen at polling stations across the state. Lateness of election materials and absence of voters' registers marred the poll in Ibadan.

There were pockets of violence in parts of the state, as people disregarded the state government's stay-at-home order, going about their normal businesses. There were also reported cases of harassment and intimidation of perceived opponents by suspected PDP supporters in Ibadan and other parts of the state.

There was an unconfirmed report of a person killed at Mobil area of Ring-Road, Ibadan, in front of the Ibadan South-West local government secretariat.

In Ibarapa Central council area, the AC Vice-Chairmanship candidate, Olaide Abass, was arrested by the police after a ballot box reportedly stocked with already thump-printed ballot papers was reportedly burnt.

Despite the withdrawal of AC and some opposition parties, the council polls in Osun State held on a largely peaceful note.

The election, which began at 8 a.m was extended by two hours by the Chairman of the State Independent Electoral Commission (OSSIEC), Justice Adedotun Sijuwade to allow more people participate.

There was fairly large turn out of voters, most of them PDP members in most of the areas. Some opposition parties took active part in the election. They are the Alliance for Democracy (AD), Progressive Action Congress (PAC), Democratic Peoples Party (DPP), Movement for Democracy and Justice (MDJ), and National Democratic Party (NDP).

There was no reports of disruption of election in all the voting centres, as voters queued up to cast their votes in Awo, Ogbagba, Iwo, Ikire, Iragbiji, Ikirun, Ire, Ode-Omu, Gbongan and Ede. There was however reports of shortage of ballot papers in some areas which the

OSSIEC responded promptly by supplying extra materials to the affected places.

There was low turn-out also in Ondo, as the bulk of the electorate stayed away from the polling booths in the 18 council areas.

In spite of the order on restriction of movement on from 7a.m to 3p.m on Election Day announced by the Ondo State Independent Electoral Commission (ODIEC) had announced on Friday, apathy and low turn-out generally characterised the exercise in the state.

As at 10am, no voting activity was visible in many parties of Akure, though election materials were ready at the polling centres as early as 7:30 in the morning. Polling officers and security personnel, including the Police, were the only people around the polling centres.

At Owode-Imuagun ward, unit 017 in Akure South council area, the presiding officer said no voter had approached the centre as at 10:30am, the same applicable at Gbogi/Isikan ward, unit 032, both in the central part of the state capital.

No party's agent other than that of the PDP was at the polling centres visited by Sunday Independent, which confirmed that other political parties in the state might have boycotted the election.

ODIEC chairman, Jones Ogunmusire adjudged the election as peaceful, the low turn-out notwithstanding. He told newsmen at Sacred Heart R.C.M Primary School premises in Akure that since the voting time is between 8a.m to 3p.m, all people didn't have to come out at the same time.

"What we want is peaceful election and the wish has been achieved judging by the situation on ground."

Labour Party governorship candidate in Ondo State, Olusegun Mimiko celebrated the low turn out, commending the people of the State for boycotting the council polls. He noted that the people had by their action, shown they have respect for the rule of law.

In Benin City and its environs, arson, shooting and general tension marred the local government council elections that held in Edo state. There were reports that some three persons were shot at the Sakpoba area of the Edo State capital, during the election, but this could not be

confirmed from government sources at press time.

The major roads within Benin, including the very busy Sapele Road, were sealed off by a platoon of policemen and soldiers. Two armoured personnel carriers were visible at the Oredo local government office of the Edo state Independent Electoral Commission (EDSIEC) to prevent irate youths from torching the facility.

At Abudu, the Orhionmwon local government council headquarters was razed. In far-flung Afuze, protesters torched EDSIEC's office and the Owan East council secretariat, particular the legal section, central stores and the computer equipment. The protests also resulted in burning down offices of EDSIEC in Orhionmwon, Ovia North East, Ovia South West.

At Igubeen, home town of AC leader, Tom Ikimi, some of his party supporters allegedly attacked some persons, who they accused of thumb-printing on ballot papers. They also abducted the electoral officer, beating the latter up mercilessly in the process.

Edo State Deputy Governor, Lucky Imasuen told journalists that a similar attack would have been unleashed on Oredo council secretariat but was scuttled in good time. He accused the AC supporters of being behind the attacks.

However, Governor Oserheimen Osunbor who cast his vote in his Iruakpen country home expressed satisfaction with the peaceful conduct of the polls in the area. The elections were peaceful in the Edo Central area while violence marred the exercise in the North and the South districts.

Former President of Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) and AC governorship candidate in the state, Adams Oshiomhole accused the PDP of engaging in brazen malpractices in the election. So many ballot boxes were seen littering the ground at the Oredo EDSIEC office, as Oshiomhole addressed journalists on Saturday.

In Enugu State, two persons were feared dead at the Igbo-Eze South Local Government Area (LGA). The victims whose identity could not be immediately ascertained, lost their lives during an outbreak of hostilities between PDP supporters and those of Labour Party (LP) at Ibagwa-aka town, one of the communities that make up Igbo-Eze South.

Three buses allegedly belonging to supporters of a

House of Representatives member, whose election was quashed by Tribunal last Tuesday in the area, were also reportedly set ablaze by political thugs.

Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) in Enugu, a Deputy Superintendent of Police, Mike Abattam, confirmed outbreak of violence in the area. He could not confirm the casualties, however.

"We got wind of violence in that area but I am not aware of any death as I speak with you now," he said.

When contacted, ENSEIC Chairman, Abel Nwobodo, said that he was not aware of the violence. He added that elections were extended to 5p.m in Igbo-Eze, Udenu and Nsukka Local Governments, due to late arrival of election materials.

Nwobodo categorically stated that the commission has not cancelled any election and has no plans to do so, stressing that the exercise by his findings was going on peacefully.

Elsewhere in the State, the exercise went on peacefully, despite the low turnout of voters.

Enugu State Governor, Sullivan Chime, voted in his hometown, Udi around 11am. Deputy Senate President, Ike Ekweremadu voted in his country home at Aninri Local Government, about the same time.

Ekweremadu who was accompanied by former Speaker of Enugu House of Assembly, Abel Chukwu, told newsmen on phone that the exercise was peaceful and orderly.

Few voters were seen at polling stations in Enugu metropolis casting their votes, while security personnel were positioned in strategic locations to forestall possible breach of peace.

In Progressive Peoples Alliance-governed Abia State, the PDP denied claims by the State Independent Electoral Commission (ABSIEC) that it got its approval and that of other political parties in the state to conduct the proposed January 19, 2008 council poll.

Acting State Chairman of the PDP, Benson Ezem said that there was no way the party would have been part of the agreement to hold the election in January 19 when there is a subsisting court order restraining ABSIEC from conducting the LG elections in Abia state.

He stressed that since an order of interlocutory injunction made by the Federal High Court in Abuja, dated May 14, 2007 has not been vacated, there is no way the PDP could participate in an election which the court has stopped. To do that would amount to contempt of court, he said.