

One Dies As Violence Mars Benue LG Polls

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Violence, rigging and other forms of electoral malpractices characterised the Saturday council polls in Benue State.

At least one person was reported killed during the election into the 23 local government areas in the state.

High political intrigues prevented elections from holding in Ohimini Council area. Allegations of violent snatching of ballot boxes, diversion of election materials, massive thump-print-

ing and allocation of votes, with candidates of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) fingered as the main beneficiaries, took the shine off the exercise.

One person, a suspected PDP thug, was reported dead in Gwer-East Council.

Our correspondent, who monitored the elections in at least seven councils, reports that in most places, the Benue State Independent Electoral Commission (BSIEC) in connivance with PDP and security agents deliberately caused the diversion of election materials, especially

in remote areas, to secret locations where they were thump-printed and results submitted at collation centres.

It was also observed that election materials were only supplied to urban centres in most local governments, to camouflage to election observers a pseudo election process, but were violently snatched by suspected PDP thugs later in the day.

In Gwer-East, an All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) stronghold, election materials were diverted in the eight wards of Akpachai, Kyonov, Shough, Gbemacha, Mbasombo, Mbabur, Ikyogbajir and Ugee.

In Agatu Council with 10 wards, election materials were diverted

or snatched in Usha, Enugba, Oshigbudu, Ogbaulu, Odugbeho and Okokolu among others.

In Kwande, reports indicate that apart from Adikpo Township, election materials for almost all the wards were diverted and thumb-printed in the private houses of PDP chieftains and results turned in.

Similar trends were observed in Makurdi, the state capital, where suspected cultists allegedly hired by the PDP either violently snatched ballot boxes or stuffed them with already marked ballot papers in the public glare. They even threatened security agents who attempted to oppose the abuse of the electoral process.