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Abuja

Cartoon for the day

LAST UPDATED AT Tue Mar, 22 2011

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Bloodbath in Akwa Ibom, five feared dead

- As PDP, ACN supporters clash
- Buhari blames police for killings at CPC rally
- CPC Gov candidate escapes death in Kebbi

By Adetutu Folasade-Koyi (Abuja), Aniefiok Macauley (Uyo), Ayo Ajoge (Birnin-Kebbi) and Seyi Oguntuase (Lagos)



Former Head of Interim Government, Ernest Shonekan (left); legal practitioner Joe Gadzama; and Anambra State Governor, Peter Obi; at a public lecture on "Free and fair elections, myth or reality" in Abuna ... on Tuesday. Photo: Jide Oyekunle.

On Tuesday, Senate President David Mark averted what could have been a bloody clash in Benue State between his supporters and those of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN).

That was after the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC) Governorship candidate in Kebbi narrowly escaped death on Monday in the continued onslaught against the opposition countrywide.

Two people died in the Kebbi fracas.

Meanwhile, the political death toll rose to **five in Akwa Ibom** on Tuesday, in a mayhem the Commissioner of Police, **Sani Madaji**, claimed was a minor incident.

The killings came from a clash between Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and ACN supporters.

ACN members on a campaign tour to Ikot Ekpene Council were reportedly ambushed by alleged PDP supporters who fired gunshots at the convoy.

A man who identified himself simply as Ibora narrated that he escaped from the scene and returned to Uyo through a bush path.

He said the attackers barricaded all roads leading to Ikot Ekpene with wood stumps and dug big holes on the roads.

Ibora said the vehicle conveying the ACN Governorship candidate, John James Akpanudoedeghe, and his wife was shot at severally, but they could not be hit because the vehicle is bullet proof.

ACN members who escaped back to Uyo went on a reprisal, blocking the Olusegun Obasanjo Way near the state Secretariat Complex and destroying anything with a PDP logo or the insignia of Governor Godswill Akpabio.

About 500 brand new vehicles meant for Keke NAPEP taxi scheme in Uyo were burnt. Likewise the Jonathan/Sambo campaign office.

Fortune Schools, a private secondary school belonging to Aloysius Etuk, a PDP Senatorial candidate for Ikot Ekpene, was also burnt.

ACN Media and Publicity Sub-committee Chairman, Thomas Akpan, said: "We went to campaign in Ikot Ekpene and the people blocked us on the way from Ikot Obong Edong near the road leading to Ikono Local Government.

"They started throwing stones at us, shooting at us and damaged our cars. We had to return to Uyo because we were empty handed and as I am talking to you we do not know the whereabouts of our Governorship candidate.

Soldiers have been deployed in Wellington Bassey Way leading to Government House, and armoured tanks are in major road junctions to forestall

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a further break down of law and order.

Political intolerance equally reared its head on Tuesday in Nasarawa as three Emirs were barred from hosting CPC Presidential candidate, Muhammadu Buhari.

In turn, Buhari blamed police complicity for the upsurge in campaign violence, citing Jos, which recorded four political killings on Monday.

He mourned the deaths, and demanded a thorough probe.

Buhari said through his Campaign Spokesman, Yinka Odumakin, that the whole world is aware of the attempt by the police to sabotage the CPC rally in Jos on the pretext that another rally by Plateau State Governor, Jonah Jang, should take precedence over that of the CPC which was earlier communicated to the police.

"We rejected the unjust diktat in our quest to ensure that the (Peoples Democratic Party, PDP) does not continue to ride roughshod over the opposition and closing the democratic space in the process," Odumakin said in a statement.

He recounted that on arrival in Jos on Monday, the CPC delegation headed for Jang's office on a courtesy visit, "the normal thing we do in every state we go no matter the party in power."

While with Jang, Odumakin added, a large crowd of supporters gathered outside which made the CPC team to shelve its proposed visit to the traditional ruler of Jos and the Christian and Islamic communities, in line with the party's "responsible conduct," mindful of the "unparalleled support" it gets in every city it has campaigned.

"This informed our diverting to Ganya the day our movement was to meet President Goodluck Jonathan's convoy near Yola as we campaigned in Adamawa the same day.

"From the Governor's office we proceeded to the Polo Ground venue of our rally where we had a successful event without any incident.

"It was at the end of the rally that we got a report that the police, acting out the PDP script, waylaid thousands of our supporters in the Massalacin Ja'ama area, some distance from Polo Ground and insisted that they must not go for the rally.

"The police subsequently fired gunshots into the crowd killing four people and wounding several others."

Odumakin quoted eyewitnesses who narrated that the police brought a fire fighting truck to clean the blood of the deceased, but "we have no doubt that their blood will get justice as Nigeria will not endure this lawlessness for long.

"Those who murdered citizens whose only offence was exercising their freedom of association will face the full wrath of the law in due season.

"We have no doubt that these killings were masterminded to halt the balance of faith which the Buhari/Bakare combination was bringing to Jos as against the balance of hate which the PDP banks upon to maintain its tenuous hold on the area.

"Let them be rest assured that the people of Jos will not be bound to violence for long. Healing is coming to that land as indigenes and settlers would be brought to the table of brotherhood which a responsible leadership under Buhari promises."

The CPC also suffered violence in Kebbi on Monday, on top of maltreatment on Tuesday in Nasarawa where Governor Aliyu Doma of the PDP barred Emirs from receiving Buhari.

Two people died in Dakingari in Kebbi State when a mob, comprising the young and the elderly, trooped out to attack the convoy of CPC Governorship candidate, Abubakar Gari.

A statement issued by Gari's Adviser, Abdullahi Zuru, accused the PDP of sponsoring the attack on behalf of Governor Sa'idu Dakingari, an indigene of Dakingari.

Zuru alleged that the unprovoked attack was aimed at assassinating Gari and Adamu Aliero.

He said two CPC supporters were clubbed to death, 15 others were seriously injured, and 13 vehicles belonging to the party were burnt, in a plot carried out by thugs the PDP allegedly hired from neighbouring villages.

"Based on the plan, as the CPC Governorship campaign team arrived, the thugs – armed with cutlasses, sword, axes and gallons of petrol – laid siege, set bonfire with the tyres and pounced on the campaign team, while shouting 'where is Gari Mallam, where is Aliero?'

"We strongly believe that Dakingari and the PDP are deliberately courting violence in (Kebbi) with the aim of creating a state of lawlessness in order to force the INEC (Independent National Electoral Commission) to postpone the April elections in the state based on their conviction that they would certainly be defeated at the polls."

However, Dakingari's Media Publicity Assistant, Ibrahim Argungu, countered that it was unfortunate to link his boss with the violence in his home town.

In Nasarawa State, three Emirs vacated their palaces ahead of Buhari's courtesy call on them.

From the palace of the Emir of Nasarawa town, to those of the Emirs of Keffi and Lafia, Buhari met locked doors, allegedly on the orders of Doma, the Governor, who reportedly threatened to depose them if they hosted him.

Buhari, nevertheless, entered each palace to fulfill all righteousness. What he lost in being received by the Emirs was compensated for with mammoth crowds which received him affectionately in each emirate.

All the major towns and cities were shut down as the residents revelled in colourful celebrations of what they saw as a triumphant entry.

Buhari thanked a large crowd of supporters at the palace of the Emir of Keffi for their support and promised to fulfill their hopes and aspirations if elected President.

"You shall be presented with the golden opportunity of electing a Governor who will respect your traditional institution in a few weeks. I implore you to use your votes wisely," he counselled.

The State Security Service (SSS) Director in Kebbi, Ibrahim Katsina, has

expressed concern over the increasing violence

He said the rate at which political parties attack one another in the state poses danger to a smooth, free and fair poll, and that he had told them at a meeting that the security agents may be compelled to prosecute errant personalities.

In Benue, Mark, the Senate President, averted a bloody clash between the supporters of the PDP and Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) in Obagaji after the ACN Governorship campaign train bumped into his convoy.

The atmosphere was charged between two groups of supporters but Mark came out of his vehicle and prevailed on his supporters not to respond to the provocation, reminding them that election is a mere contest and not a war.

However, Mark on arrival at the palace of the traditional ruler of Agatu, John Onah, urged him to call his people to order as electioneering is not enough ground for them to take the law into their hands.

He asked Onah to "caution a few of his subjects in the opposition party who are instigating trouble to desist from their ignoble roles. This election for me is not a do or die affair. However, we would not condone lawlessness.

"Nobody should hide under electioneering to cause trouble in any part of this state or the country," Mark said.

He pledged to continue to restrain his followers from reacting to threats from the opposition.

Onah assured him that "my people will vote for you because you have made us proud at the national level. If you have not done well, I would have told you so. I do not think you need a campaign among my people.

"In Agatu, my people will return you because you are a performer and a good leader. We will not allow opposition in Agatu. Continue to make peace and do not be distracted by the irresponsible act of the opposition."



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On Wed Mar, 23 2011 12:59 by ALICHE VICTOR OKWUCHI

MOST OF THE PDP CANDIDATES ARE UNPOPULAR AND SO THEY ARE AFRAID OF LOSING THE ELECTION. I THOUGHT THE GOVERNOR IS SO POPULAR FOR HIS GROUP TO ATTACK THE ACN CANDIDATES. I HEARD THAT MOST OF PDP IN **AKWA IBOM** STATE HAS DUMPED PDP AND JOINED ACN. MAYBE ACN WILL WIN THE BALLOT BUT AKPBIO HAS PERFORMED BUT DON'T HARM PEOPLE AGAIN- A VOICE OF WISDOM FROM AJU STRUCTURE

On Wed Mar, 23 2011 07:21 by Akhabue

The trend of violence during the on-going political campaigns in Nigeria is similar to the pattern of conflict in Ivory Coast. Perhaps we should consider postponing the elections in order to cool down the high political temperature; and to avoid a President Gbagbo vs. ex-PM Ouattara type of North /South divide. In this period of Lent, the mayhem caused by political rivalry is especially unacceptable. All residents of Nigeria should please pray for divine intervention.

On Wed Mar, 23 2011 06:21 by Dave Yola.

WHAT HAS HE DAVID MARK DONE THAT IS STILL CONTESTING AGAIN, PLEASE CAN U ALL IMAGINE, HE COULD NOT INFLUENCE THE REPAIR OF THE FEDERAL ROAD FROM MAKURDI TO ENUGU AS A PRESIDENT OF A SENATE, NOR DOING ANYTHING WORTH BELIEVING IN OTUKPO. IS IT NOT A SHAME? HE SHOULD GIVE ANOTHER CHANCE TO TRY.

On Tue Mar, 22 2011 07:33 by sam

PDP madness. As the elections draw closer the party has become more desperate unleashing the thugs it has been nurturing in the past 12 years. But they are failing and they know it.

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