

A security agent searching an electorate before approaching the accreditation desk in Kubwa, Abuja, yesterday. PHOTO BY OYEDELE OMOKAGBO

38 Killed In Gombe, Borno, Rivers

At least 38 people were killed in bomb and shooting incidents in Gombe, Borno and Rivers states yesterday.

In Gombe, suspected Boko Haram gunmen opened fire on voters at polling stations killing at least seven people.

The first of the attacks happened in the neighbouring villages of Birin Bolawa and Birin Fulani in the Nafada district of Gombe, which has been repeatedly targeted by the Islamists.

An election official, who requested anonymity, said: "We could hear the gunmen shouting, 'Didn't we warn you about staying away from (the) election?'"

Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau said in a video message last month that the militants would disrupt Saturday's general election, which they see as "un-Islamic".

The election official said the masked gunmen arrived in Birin Bolawa in a pickup truck at about 8.30am, just after accreditation for Saturday's presidential election had begun.

"They set fire to all the election materials we abandoned as we escaped," he added.

Gunmen later stormed the town

of Dukku, 80km from the state capital Gombe city, at about 11.30, shooting randomly as voters queued up at polling stations, residents said.

"They shot dead three people dead and injured two others," said Ibrahim Ahmad, adding that the attackers then killed a state assembly lawmaker and the local chief in the nearby herding village of Tilen.

In the same vein, residents of Miringa town of Biu local government area, Borno yesterday went to polls amidst blood and tears as they had to bury 25 persons killed by Boko Haram terrorists in the early hours of election day, security sources and government official said.

Borno state governor, Kashim Shettima, had confirmed the incident to newsmen in an interview shortly after he cast his votes at his ward.

Residents who witnessed the incident said Boko Haram terrorists torched houses in the wee hours of the night and smoked out sleeping residents and began to shoot them at sight.

Mallam Garba Buratai who fled the attacked town to Biu, 30km away told journalists on phone that "the insurgents killed 25 people, injured

5 before setting ablaze some houses and fled away", he said. He added that "they had earlier sent messages around warning us not to encourage democracy by participating in the today's election".

Buratai town used to be a voting centre for about six communities under Buratai District and this usually make voters to converge in the towns on the eve of elections.

Also, at least one soldier, and three others were feared killed yesterday in various parts of Rivers state during the elections.

The Brigade Commander, 2 Brigade, Port Harcourt, Brigadier General Koko Essien, said the soldier was killed when hoodlums opened fire on security agents on election duty in Obio/Akpor local government area of the state.

Apart from the soldier, three other people were killed in Tai, Eleme and Obio/Akpor local government areas of the state.

This is as members and supporters of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in three local government areas of the state boycotted the elections due to the refusal of officials of the INEC to provide the result sheets for the elections.