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Violence: 28 Die In Rivers, A'Ibom, Kebbi Others

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No fewer than 28 persons were reported dead in various states across the country as governorship and states Houses of Assembly elections held.

Eight persons, including a policeman, were killed yesterday before actual voting started in Rivers State.

The policeman was killed in the morning at the Rex-Lawson area of the old Port Harcourt Township even before accreditation commenced.

Though the cause of the cop's death was not known, the State Police Public Relations Officer, PPRO, Ahmad Muhammad, who confirmed the killing, said there were traces of violence before the policeman died.

Muhammad said, "The policeman killed was one of those deployed to monitor the elections today (Saturday). We saw that there was evidence of violence before he was killed. His remains have been moved from to a nearby morgue

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and we have commenced investigation into the killing."

The police image maker further explained that over 17, 000 policemen were deployed to monitor the poll across the state, with a minimum of two policemen at each polling unit.



It was gathered that one person was beheaded, while two others were shot dead in Asari-Toru local government area of the state.

Hoodlums also stormed INEC office and reportedly threw substances suspected to be dynamite into the office, destroying election materials and vehicles.

Though the cause of the killings was not immediately ascertained, there were

indications that it may not be unconnected with the power tussle between the two main political parties in the state.

Also, eyewitnesses said there were heavy shootings on Friday night preceding the election up until about 7am yesterday morning in Buguma, headquarters of Asari-Toru local government area, with supporters of parties spotted burning tyres on the main roads.

The situation heightened tension in the area, while many residents stayed at home for fear of being hit by stray bullets.

Meanwhile, in Rumuomasi, a reporter with Channels Television, Grace Ekang, and his photographer were attacked and beaten by angry youths. The details of the attack were not clear.

Also, in Bomu, Gokana local government area, a reporter with Silverbird Rhythm FM, Ofonime Okon, was beaten by thugs who asked if he was sent by a particular governorship candidate in the state. The vehicle he was travelling in was damaged.

Also, in Okpogo community, Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni local government area, a group of youths reportedly snatched ballot boxes, while two unidentified men were shot dead.

In Odual local government area, there were shootings which resulted in the loss of one life, though the police are yet to confirm this report. Policemen and other security personnel were spotted along Omuku town looking for hoodlums who allegedly snatched ballot

boxes.

It was also gathered that the state commissioner for women affairs, Mrs Joyba West, was attacked by hoodlums and her home burnt down.

Her information and communications counterpart, Mrs Ibim Semenitari, who confirmed the attack on Mrs West, said her colleague was still in hiding.

Meanwhile, Governor Chibuike Amaechi and his wife, Judith, after being accredited at ward in Ubima, Ikwerre local government area, described the election in the state as a sham.

Amaechi told journalists that the governorship and House of Assembly elections were characterized by ballot box snatching, intimidation and harassment.

He also disowned text messages allegedly traced to him calling on Rivers people not to vote and for the election to be cancelled. He said his phone number must have been cloned.

Mrs Semenitari, who spoke for the governor, said her principal had at no time called on INEC to cancel the polls.

In Oyiabo local government area, explosion from substances suspected to be dynamite went off near a polling unit, but voters defied the scare and later went to be accredited before 1pm.

In Kano State, thugs suspected to be hired by unscrupulous politicians burnt ballot papers and attempted to snatch election materials in Madobi and Kibiya local government areas of Kano State, respectively.

The state commissioner of police, Ibrahim Idris, confirmed that violence broke out at Kaura-Mata in Madobi local government area where political thugs burnt ballot papers and boxes.

In a separate telephone interview with the police spokesman in Kano, ASP Magaji Musa Majiya revealed that what caused chaos at Kauran-Mata was that a PDP ward leader, Kauran Mata, specifically tore a ballot paper and requested his hired thugs to disrupt the process.

However, INEC, Resident Electoral Commissioner, Alhaji Hussaini Halilu Pai told our reporter that in the early hours of yesterday, suspected hired thugs attempted to snatch election materials in Kibiya local government area while officials were on their way to Kahu ward.

According to him, police quick intervention prevented the youth from carrying out their evil plan.

Also, in Kebbi State, soldiers yesterday allegedly shot dead three people in Suru local government of Kebbi State after pandemonium broke out during the polls.

According to an eyewitness who spoke to LEADERSHIP SUNDAY on condition of anonymity, the incident occurred at a village called Bayan Dutsi when voters suspected the INEC supervisor in the area of malpractice and descended on him, beating him to coma.

The eyewitness explained that following the incident, soldiers were called in to restore order, but the angry voters, most of whom youths, threw stones at the soldiers, prompting the soldiers to open fire, killing three.

Police public relations officer in the state, Nafiu Abubakar, confirmed the incident and said it would be investigated.

"Yes the incident happened but you see I am in Birnin Kebbi for election work but it will be investigated", he said.

A similar incident of killing also occurred at Kanya in Danko Wasagu local government of Kebbi State when unknown gunmen shot dead one Umaru Gomma, a renowned APC politician in the area. Reports said the gunmen stormed his residence and opened fire on him.

On his part, former governor of Akwa Ibom, Obong Victor Atta, described the governorship and House Assembly elections in the state as a sham and a disgrace to electoral process.

Atta told newsmen he monitored the polls at his country home in Ibeskpo Asutan local government area, but that he was not even allowed to vote as thugs with the support of some unscrupulous security operatives brazenly carried off all electoral materials from his ward.

"This is a monumental evil, and a rape on democracy. I cannot believe my eyes on seeing what happened in my dear state today. Thugs hired by the ruling party in the state, the PDP, came directly to my unit and removed all the election materials and bolted, leaving the people who had come to vote, perplexed", he said.

Atta lamented the agony of his people who were prevented from performing their civil right and called on the INEC to cancel the elections because of irregularities that pervaded the whole exercise.

Meanwhile, over five persons were said to have lost their lives at different locations during the governorship and House of Assembly elections in the state.

A middle-aged man was reported killed at Nsit Ibium local government area, the home of the state APC governorship candidate, Umana Okon Umana, who called for an outright cancellation of the elections in the state.


Umana, who made the call while addressing journalists in his country home, Ndiya, said that elections could not hold in several polling units across the state because of malpractices and intimidation by PDP thugs who allegedly hijacked materials.


He explained that hired thugs carried off all the election materials meant for his ward and other units in the local government area.


"Reports from our men on the field indicate that there was massive invasion of all polling stations by thugs and agents of the PDP," he stated.


In Uyo, the state capital, LEADERSHIP SUNDAY reports that two youths were shot dead as they engaged thugs who had invaded their polling units on Ikot Ekpene road.

There were also reports that three people died in Imo State, while Ebonyi, Cross River, Plateau, Katsina and Benue states lost an individual each.

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The most pain of all these killings are the ones perpetrated by untrained and uncultured trigger happy soldiers who have no regard for the life of civilians. The President-elect has a lot of work ahead in cleaning the rubbish prevalent in the politicized military. The service 'thieves' must account for their corruptions in the last 6years. The lack of trainings and regards for the lives of civilians have turned them into partisan butchers.

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