

# Three shot dead as violence erupts in Ekiti bye-election

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***By Rasaq Ibrahim, Ado-Ekiti and Okodili Ndidi, Abuja***

- ***Senator escapes death***
- ***INEC suspends polls***
- ***Fayemi, Fayose condemn killings***

All hell broke loose at Omuo Ekiti on Saturday midway into the bye election to fill the vacancy in the Ekiti East Constituency 1 of the Ekiti State House of Assembly.

Three persons, including a policewoman, were shot dead by suspected thugs in the orgy of violence while six others were injured.

Senator Biodun Olujimi (Ekiti South) narrowly escaped being caught in the hail of bullets. She had just voted when the violence began.

Among the injured were a National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) member, an official of the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) and two policemen.

The injured are now in the hospital receiving treatment.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) immediately suspended further voting.

The police confirmed the death of the policewoman but did not disclose her identity.

Killed with her were 50-year old Bola Adebisi and 35-year old Tunde Ogunleye.

Apart from the shooting incident, there were also reports of ballot box snatching in some units.

The two main parties in the state, All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) launched into a war of words over the shooting.

Senator Olujimi said the election started peacefully before thugs, allegedly sponsored by the APC, and compromised police officers disrupted the voting process.

The lawmaker said she narrowly escaped being shot when the thugs invaded her polling unit 007 at Ward 7.

She said she was ferried out of the polling unit by party supporters.

She said: "the leaders of APC came to the polling unit, in fact we greeted them warmly. After they left, some APC thugs who stayed behind pulled out guns and started shooting sporadically.

"This is the first time we would witness this. They picked the ballot box and ran away.

"A man died as he was trying to escape the scene. The policewoman guarding the ballot box was also shot in the head. The corps member and the Presiding Officer at the unit were hit by bullets.

“In totality, eight people were shot. Some died and five are battling with their lives in the hospital, receiving treatments.”

She accused APC leaders of masterminding the attack.

A member of the House of Representatives and native of the town, Hon. Femi Bamisile, described the shooting as appalling and unbelievable, saying no election is worth the blood of any Nigerian.

His words: “In any election where people are being lost, that is no longer democracy.

“APC was fully prepared for this election and canvassed for votes and we never wanted to kill anybody.

“I really don’t understand how it happened. I didn’t want to believe that it was our party.

“The election started peacefully. What could have caused the shooting and killing?”

## **Killers won’t go scot free, says Fayemi**

Governor Kayode Fayemi in a statement through his Chief Press Secretary, Yinka Oyeboode, has pledged that the brains behind the killings will not go scot-free.

He asked the police to fish out any one involved in the violence irrespective of his political affiliation.

The governor commiserated with the bereaved families and the injured.

He said: “This violence is most unwarranted and deeply disturbing. I have instructed the police authorities to fish out the perpetrators and ensure they face the music.

“Our condolences to the families that lost loved ones and those who were injured. Government would not relent in efforts to always ensure safety of lives and properties. We shall ensure all purveyors of violence are brought to book.”

## **Fayose: It’s state-sponsored terrorism**

The immediate past governor of the state, Mr. Ayodele Fayose, has blamed the APC for the violence.

He said: “I thought we had gone past this barbarism in Ekiti State, especially when we are confronted with national insecurity to which the government has no solution.

“What was witnessed today in Omuo Ekiti is nothing but terrorism against the people of Ekiti, knowing that time has caught up with them and they are no longer popular.

“This will remain guilty in the conscience of the perpetrators and their sponsors perpetually for killing their own people just because of a mere House of Assembly bye-election.

“Most importantly, everything that goes round in life comes round. The perpetrators of this despicable act should therefore remember that there will be consequences for all actions because the blood of the dead will surely speak and fight back.

“To the police in Ekiti, they know what to do and the people behind all these, if only they chose not to look away. Ekiti shall be free again if we collectively confront and win this battle against fake apostles of democracy.”

Also, the ex- Ekiti State Deputy Governor, Prof. Kolapo Olusola Eleka, condemned the killings, adding that youths should be engaged positively to add values to Ekiti and not be used as political thugs.

He called on the police to apprehend and prosecute those behind the wanton killing, saying “it would be a shame if those behind the killing of his officer are not arrested and prosecuted”.

The Police Public Relations Officer, Sunday Abutu, said six persons, including one NYSC member and two policemen, were shot.

He said: “Today, some hoodlums attacked Ward 7 Unit 7 during the House of Assembly bye-election. In the process, six people were injured; among them were two policemen and one National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) member who are currently receiving treatment in Ikole General Hospital”.

Abutu said Governor. Kayode Fayemi had directed that all suspects in the matter must be apprehended and brought to book.

The People’s Democratic Party (PDP) in the Southwest condemned the killings and violence that marred the by-election.

The Zonal Director of Media and Publicity, Lere Olayinka, accused the Police of collaborating with thugs to foment trouble even as he described the violence and the killing as saddening.

He said: “During Fayemi’s first tenure, it was in this same Omuo Ekiti that Michael Ipinlaye and Kehinde Fajuyi were killed by thugs while Foluso Ogundare was killed in Akure Ekiti and Ayo Murphy Jeje and Juliana Adewumi were killed in Erijiyan Ekiti.

“Also, during the 2019 local government elections in which only APC contested, one person was killed in Ikere Ekiti.

## INEC suspends bye-election following killing of voters

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) said it has suspended the bye election indefinitely following violent attacks on voters, election officials and security personnel.

The Commission said to continue the election would amount to rewarding bad behavior.

INEC National Commissioner and Chairman Information and Voter Education Committee, Festus Okoye, said: “The Commission made adequate arrangements for the election. Personnel and materials arrived on time in all the 39 polling units spread across 5 Wards of the Constituency for the 23,670 registered voters to exercise their franchise in a free and fair process.

“However, no sooner had voting commenced than unidentified gunmen unleashed mayhem at some Polling Units, thereby disrupting the process.”

“The Commission commiserates with the innocent victims of this dastardly act and affront to our democracy”.

The vacancy arose following the death of an All Progressives Congress lawmaker in the State House of Assembly, Hon Juwa Adegbuyi.

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