

## NEWS

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## Anambra: Tension as gunmen kill four policemen in attack on convoy



Damaged Hilux Pick up van carrying the security agents after the attack

From Nwanosike  
Onu, Awka/Damian  
■ Duruibeoma, Enugu/Emma  
Elekwa, Onitsha/Okodili  
Nndi, Abuja

withdrew, having been overwhelmed, they were promptly intercepted at Eda by troops of Forward Operating Base Ohaozara in Ebonyi State," he said.

"The troops recovered additional three vehicles and apprehended one of the gunmen."

### Soludo, Uba clash over state's debt profile

The candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in next weekend's governorship election in Anambra State, Senator Andy Uba, yesterday took a swipe at his All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) counterpart, Prof. Charles Soludo, for allegedly feigning ignorance of the debt profile of the state.

Uba, in a statement issued in Awka by his campaign organisation, accused the former Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) governor of trying to cover up Governor Willie Obiano's 'obsessive borrowing binge' being his sponsor for the election.

The Independent national Electoral Commission (INEC) in an update yesterday on its preparation for the polls said voting would take place in 5,640 of the 5,720 polling units across the 21 local government areas in the state.

But major civil society organisations in the Southeast are not convinced that the current atmosphere in the state is conducive for any election. They want the polls shifted to allow for the cooling of tension.

The Senator Andy Uba Governorship Campaign Organisation (SAUGCO) said Soludo was playing cheap politics by claiming in a recent television interview that he was unaware that the state has a huge debt profile under Governor Obiano.

"We see Soludo's demurred stance on a very sensitive issue that affects the lives of the people as cheap politics and an attempt to cover up the sins of his pay masters to the detriment of the state," Victor Ogenne, Director, Media and Publicity of SAUGCO said.

He added: "We are however happy that APGA's antics are already known to the people who are waiting to finally send them packing on November 6."

"Ironically, data released

by the DMO on December 31, 2020 indicated that Anambra's domestic debt stood at N59,013 billion as at September 30, 2020, while the state's external debt profile was \$115,886 million as at June, 2020.

"Indeed, it is shocking that a Professor Soludo who should have such information at the tip of his fingers, would elect to play politics with such information crucial to the lifeblood of the state, or was simply being mischievous."

"Whichever is the case, Professor Soludo owes Ndi Anambra the patriotic duty of researching into what really is the debt liability of our dear state, Anambra."

"In fact, for a man who was two years ago, in November 2019, given the task of fashioning out the grandiose 50-year Anambra 2070 Vision Agenda not to be seized of important data such as the profit and loss account of the state speaks eloquently about his capacity for accomplishing small, practical assignments."

Responding, Mr C-Don Adinuba, Anambra State Commissioner for Information and Enlightenment, however, dismissed the Uba Campaign Organisation's statement as a "mere joke".

Adinuba who doubles as the Director Media, Prof. Charles Soludo Governorship Campaign Organisation, said though Obiano's administration cannot claim it did not incur debt, the large debt owed could be tagged 'historical debt'.

He said that no government could operate without debts, saying that the debt incurred by the present administration was minimal.

### INEC okays 5,640 polling units for election

Giving an update yesterday on its preparation for the November 6 polls, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) said voting would take place in 5,640 of the 5,720 polling units across the 21 local government areas of the state.

New 1,112 units were added to the existing 4,608, INEC Chairman Prof. Mahmood Yakubu said at a consultative meeting with political parties.

He said 86 of the polling units or 1.5% do not have registered voters, adding that the commission would "not be deploying personnel and materials to these polling

units."

He said the governorship election "would be the first time that voting is taking place in polling units since the recent successful conversion of voting points arising from the expansion of voter access to polling units in Nigeria".

He said: "894 (15.6%) of the polling units have between 1 and 49 voters. Election will hold in these polling units. We will continue to work with all stakeholders to ensure that all polling units have voters allotted to them ahead of the 2023 general election."

"Voters were encouraged to seize the opportunity of the Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) exercise to transfer to the new polling units most convenient for them. Many did not do so."

"This can be partly attributed to the security situation in the state which has affected the Commission's pre-election outdoor activities, including voter education and sensitization."

"Understandably, the voters have also been more circumspect in asking for transfer to polling units."

"At the same time, the Commission did not use its powers under Section 42 of the Electoral Act 2010 (as amended) to allot voters to the new polling units in order to minimise the disruptions that may occur from such a decision in view of the forthcoming governorship election."

Mahmud said INEC "is ready for the Anambra State governorship election next weekend" and has already moved all non-sensitive materials for the election to the 21 local government areas of the state.

### Southeast CSOs urge INEC to shift Anambra election

However, civil society organisations in the Southeast yesterday told INEC to shift the governorship election to douse the tension and fears in the state ahead of the polls.

The CSOs said shifting the election would provide the commission and other stakeholders, including security agencies, political parties, their candidates and agents to re-strategise and find a solution to what they called militarization of the electoral space.

The CSOs said in a statement in Enugu that INEC's assurances to go ahead with the election on 6th November were totally contrary to the present

realities on the ground.

The CSOs include the International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law (Intersociety); the Southeast Zone of the Civil Liberties Organization (Southeast CLO) and the Southeast Based Coalition of Democracy and Human Rights Organization (SBCHRO).

According to them, INEC's assurances "can only be smiled at by state actor and non-state actor poll riggers. That is to say therefore that the commission's assurances are dead on arrival and repugnant to conditions for free and fair elections, particularly the referenced Anambra governorship election."

Continuing, the CSOs said: "If the commission is truly ready to conduct all-inclusive and credible governorship election in Anambra State, it ought to be deeply worried and concerned and should not have given such assurances of the graveyard."

The groups also said they had carefully analysed the clarifications given by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) group on the seven-day sit-at-home order and found same not to hold water.

### Anambra Deputy Governor to APGA: I won't resign

Anambra State Deputy Governor, Nkem Okeke, who recently dumped APGA for APC, vowed yesterday that he would not resign from office.

He described the APC as the roadmap for Ndigbo and declared that he would never regret his decision to switch camps.

The deputy governor said some persons had been mounting pressure on him to resign, but he said he would remain in office until March 17, 2022 when the tenure of the present administration in the state would expire.

His words: "I'm an accidental politician. I've not been happy in this government. I've been embarrassed and marginalised. I kept quiet when those things were happening."

But I thank Governor Willie Obiano for the exposure he gave me as deputy governor. The functions he was sending me to opened my eyes.

"I don't have anything against APGA, but we've lost the ground in the state. We can't negotiate at the centre with APGA. We need to be at the centre."

"No party is the best. We are marginalising ourselves in Anambra with religious politics and all what not. APC is the roadmap for Ndigbo."

"Leadership is not about Brian capacity but about what you have for the people, how you relate with the masses, those around you; and Andy Uba listens to people and has the capacity."

"Leadership is not about surrounding yourself with your people, but with people who have capacity to deliver. We're not doing anything to help our people."

"I won't resign. I will be here till March 17. I'm not weak; I have a strong character. Some politicians in the State know that."

We'll win Anambra poll despite our candidate's abduction - LP

The Labour Party (LP) in Anambra State said yesterday that it was poised to win the November 6 governorship election despite the abduction of its candidate, Obiora Agbasimalo.

The Organising Secretary of the party, Chief Clement Ojukwu, told reporters in Awka that the abduction was politically motivated and not unconnected with Agbasimalo's popularity and chances in the poll.

The party's flag bearer was kidnapped in September 18, 2021 on his way from Ezinifite, Nnewi to Azia in Ihiala Local Government Area of the state.

Ojukwu said the party has been in touch with Agbasimalo, expressing optimism about his release soon.

He said: "We've been in touch with his abductors to reassure us he is alive. But he has not appeared or reappeared anywhere. We're doing everything possible to ensure his release."

"The relevant agencies, the party as well as the family are working towards his release. We believe, maybe as we talk, he'll appear."

Ojukwu however declined comments on the details of the discussion with the abductors, saying they were security matters that should not be made public.

He added: "The abduction of our candidate is very political because when he was in the bank, nobody went after him, not to talk of kidnapping him."

"It was only when he declared interest to aspire to be the next governor of Anambra State that he was abducted."

"I must tell you, it's because of his popularity and that of his party in the state that other party stakeholders want to remove him to clear the way for them."

Asked the possibility of victory without the party flag bearer, Ojukwu said: "This is not the first time such thing is happening in Nigeria. (Yiola) Omosore was in Ibadan prison and won a senatorial seat and later took over."

"Theodore Orji was in Ikoyi Prison detained by EFCC, till immunity removed him immediately he was pronounced governor of Abia State."

"We're on ground already and don't need sympathy votes to win. They just abducted him together with some police officers. Force headquarters and DSS are on top of the situation."

### Kanu never ordered 'no election' in Anambra - Abaribe

Senate Minority Leader Eyinnaya Abaribe said yesterday that the detained leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, never gave a 'No Election in Anambra' order.

Citing Kanu's lawyer as his source, Abaribe said no such order came from the IPOB leader.

He accused unnamed fifth columnists as the brains behind the report.

Abaribe spoke during a town hall meeting with leadership and students of the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, organised by Valentine Ozigbo, the flag bearer of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the Anambra gubernatorial election to present his manifesto to the university community.

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THERE was tension yesterday in Ekwulobia, Aguala Local Government Area of Anambra State as four policemen were allegedly killed by unknown gunmen. Our correspondent gathered that the incident occurred at about 2pm while APGA was holding its governorship rally. According to a source, "the attackers were riding in a convoy of three Sienna vehicles when they ran into the policemen and did not waste time in killing them."

"Is that how we are going to hold the election next week?"

"The incident has created a lot of tension in my area, Ekwulobia, and its environs since afternoon."

"Everybody is afraid to move now because no one knows the next move of the gunmen."

But while some people said the convoy of Anambra State's First Lady, Mrs Ebelechukwu Obiano, was attacked by the gunmen during the campaign rally of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), others said the attack occurred during an All Progressives Congress (APC) rally.

But the State Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Ikenga Tochukwu, who said he could not confirm the incident, said they were all speculative.

He, however, confirmed to our correspondent on the phone later yesterday that there was an incident at Ekwulobia but what actually transpired had not been made clear to the command.

He said: "We are still investigating it, and as soon as we get the correct information, we will let it out. For now, they are all speculation as far as the command is concerned."

"Again, we should know there is a lot of fake news in the space and we should not believe everything we see on the social media."

The State Commissioner for Information and Public Enlightenment, Mr C Don Adinuba, said he was not in the know of such information and promised to find out.

Also, the Media and Publicity Director, Senator Andy Uba campaign organization, Hon Victor Ogenne, said the APC campaign train was never in Ekwulobia yesterday, adding that they went to Ogburu and Ihiala local government areas.

### Soldiers kill 'Biafra National Guard' member, arrest another

The army says a Biafran National Guard gunman has been killed by troops of Exercise Golden Dawn in the Southeast.

The deceased was said to be one of the gunmen who attacked the location of the troops at Amaekpu, Ohafia LGA of Abia State.

Onyema Nwachukwu, director, army public relations, announced the development in a statement issued in Abuja yesterday.

Nwachukwu said the assailants, who were heavily armed and were conveyed in several vehicles, opened fire on the troops' location but were met with "stiff resistance".

He said the gunmen abandoned their vehicles and retreated with gunshot wounds after one of them was killed.

The army spokesman said the troops also recovered a pump-action gun, among other weapons.

"While the criminals