

# Gunmen kill five in attacks on Imo PVC centre, Reps candidate

## •Policeman among fatalities

From Chris Njoku, Owerri

**F**IVE people were again killed in Imo State on Saturday, including a policeman, as gunmen went on a rampage in the state.

In the attacks carried out in different parts of the state, INEC officials were said to have sustained injuries during the issuance of PVCs.

The country home of the spokesperson of the Coalition of the United Political Parties and People's Democratic Party House of Representatives candidate, Ugochinyere Imo was also attacked.

In the attack, the hoodlums killed an uncle to Imo and three others.

It was gathered that no fewer than 30 campaign vehicles of the PDP candidate were burnt during the attack in his country home at the Akokwa community.

Imo, who confirmed the attack to newsmen in a WhatsApp message disclosed that his uncle was killed in the attack.

He called for help as his home was under siege.

Imo wrote: 'Emergency. We need help at Akokwa... We are under attack... My house is in Akokwa... They have surrounded it and opened fire. We are under attack. Help! Help!'

'We need help... My uncle has been killed now... They are setting everything on fire. Please

help.'

In a statement, the PDP in the state confirmed the attack on the country home of its candidate.

The statement which was issued by its spokesperson in the state, Collins Opuruzor read: 'Imo PDP alerts security agencies, Nigerians, international community to sponsored killings, arson going on at the Akokwa residence of Ikenga Imo Ugochinyere, PDP candidate for Ideato Federal Constituency.

'The People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Imo State alerts that at the moment, there is a well-coordinated armed attack going on at the Akokwa residence of Ikenga Imo Ugochinyere, the candidate of our Party for Ideato North/South Federal Constituency.

'This has resulted in the killing of an undisclosed number of persons. Also, buildings are reported to have been set ablaze.

'Our efforts to get back to our candidate, Ikenga Ugochinyere, who was present at his residence when this attack began and who had personally alerted us to the attack, has proven abortive. However, a torrent of messages, a while ago, from Ikenga's close

aides bore some deeply pathetic lines like: 'Everywhere is on fire! They are killing us! We are going, going!'

'Imo PDP calls on security agencies to immediately intervene and quell the attack on our candidate and our party members at his residence in Akokwa.

'Nigerians and the international community are to recall that on December 23, 2022, there was an attack on the convoy of our candidate by clearly-identified agents. It is shocking that despite our demand for the arrest and prosecution of those involved in that onslaught, nothing has been done by security till this moment.

'Today represents a dark day for us in Imo PDP and Imo State at large.'

Video footage shows dead bodies and burnt houses and campaign materials at Imo's country home.

The spokesperson for the police in the state, Michael Abattam had yet to respond to an inquiry concerning the incident.

Reacting, the Coalition of South East Youth Leaders (COSEYL), the apex socio-political youth group in the South East geopolitical zone expressed shock and dismay over the attack.

He said: 'Assassins came to as-

sassinate the CUPP spokesperson but because of the stiff resistance by the security forces attached to him, they could not gain access to him but they ended up killing his uncle, two persons, and burnt down properties in his compound. This is the second time they were making an attempt on his life.

We condemn in strongest terms the assassination of these three persons who did nothing wrong to be sent to their early graves. When did participating in the campaign and electoral process become a crime in Nigeria?

Ugochinyere in a World Press Conference had exposed the electoral fraud perpetuated by some political parties during the Continuous Voters Card Registration exercise for the 2023 general elections where he showed proof of registering dead persons and foreigners as those that will vote in the 2023 elections.

'We call on the Inspector General of Police, IGP Usman Baba, the DSS, and other security agencies to immediately move into action to arrest and prosecute those assassins who came to assassinate the peoples' voice, Barr Ikenga Ugochinyere and ended up killing three innocent persons who did nothing wrong to deserve such barbaric killing.'

**Policeman killed, INEC officials injured**

In a separate attack on Saturday in the state, a staff of Ahiazu Mbaise Local Government Area of Imo State was also killed as gunmen attacked staff of the Independent National Electoral Commission issuing Permanent Voters Cards to people.

It was also gathered that a police officer was also killed at the venue.

Reports said upon arrival, the attackers opened fire and killed the victims immediately.

The development brought to an end the PVC exercise as people scamped for safety.

While many people, including INEC staff, sustained injuries, no electoral material was reportedly lost.

A source who doesn't want his name in print said that the attackers on arrival opened fire

and insisted that the exercise must not go on in the area.

INEC Public Relations Officer, Dr. Chienyere Chijioke-Osuji confirmed the report saying, however, no INEC staff was killed.

According to her 'it happened at Ahiazu Mbaise today, a policeman was gunned down. Not an INEC staff member. No Corp member was wounded, though my AEO Ops, Barr Kingsley Ohiri and the CLO of the LG dislocated their leg and arm while jumping over the fence. Please reach out to Barr Ohiri. Glory be to God for saving our lives. It's really unfortunate we lost the Chief Security Officer to the LGA.'

The police in the state had yet to issue a statement on the incident.

## Diaspora group urges Ebonyians to shun zoning, tribalism, money-induced politics

From: Vincent Ikuomola, Abuja

**A** Diaspora group, the Association of Ebonyi Indigenous Socio-Cultural in the Diaspora (AEISCID) has urged the people of the state to shun zoning arrangements, tribalism, and money-induced politics in the forthcoming governorship election.

This is as the group declared its support for the governorship can-

our people especially as it concerns their economic well-being and social welfare.

'We are enthralled that his 'Promise of possibility' manifesto focuses on accelerated economic development and industrialization and youth and human capital development. We