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Violence Marred LG Election in Bayelsa.

Police Dislodge Market Women..., "We're Enforcing Restriction of Movement" - DPO



Violence almost marred last Saturday's local government council election in Bayelsa State conducted by the state Independent Electoral Commission (BYSIEC) as four persons were feared dead at Ekeremor town, headquarters of Ekeremor local government area of the state.

Brass local government area also recorded measures of near violence as a boat conveying electoral materials to the coastal area was said to have capsized Saturday morning. No casualty was recorded in the mishap even as causes of the overturning of the boat were not given. It was also gathered that no voting took place at Nembe and Sagbama areas as electoral materials were not seen at designated polling centers.

At the Kpansia Market in the state capital, policemen from the 'B' Division, Ekeki- Yenagoa, under the Bayelsa State Police Command, were seen violently dispersing traders who had arrived at the market very early in the morning of Saturday to carry out business. The Divisional Police Officer (DPO), 'B' Division, Ekeki-Yenagoa, Nemi Iwo, told journalists at the market that "we came to enforce restriction of movement".

The traders were seen running in all directions along the busy Isaac Boro Expressway just as vehicles sped past the busy road. No announcement was made by relevant authorities on restriction of movement in Bayelsa State because of the council election. When asked if democracy was by force or by political education, Iwo responded that "I'm not a politician".

The traders, most of who travelled from Delta and Rivers States , said they were not aware of council election holding on Saturday in the state as the vehicles in which they travelled to the state were not accosted by security operatives upon entering Yenagoa.

Impeccable sources confided in Niger Delta Standard that trouble started at Ekeremor following a supremacy battle ensued between youths loyal to the state Commissioner for Youth, Conflict Resolution and Employment Generation, Bekeakpor Etifa, who is believed to be Governor Timipre Sylva's foot-soldier in the area, and the deputy governor, Peremobowei Ebebi, who is believed to be political leader of the area.

Although Sylva and Ebebi are members of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), it was gathered that loyalists of the governor and his deputy clashed over superiority in Ekeremor, Ebebi's local government area. But the Commissioner of Police in charge of the state Onuoha Udeka insisted that the Ekeremor incident was a mere cult clash.

The identities of the four casualties could not be ascertained as at press time. Commissioner in charge of media and publicity at the BYSIEC, Tom Egba, who fielded questions from journalists monitoring the election, however, confirmed the incident but described it as a rumour.

"I heard the rumour about the fact that four persons were killed at Ekeremor local government area", said Egba, who explained that he got a call from someone who informed him about the killing of four persons in the area. Asked if his informant was not a staff of the Commission stationed at Ekeremor, Egba said he would not know the identity of the caller, stressing that "I don't know the caller".

He described the election in Yenagoa local government area as peaceful and smooth. "As you can see, the election in Yenagoa local government area is peaceful. No hijacking of ballot boxes and electoral materials by hoodlums or anybody in that matter. "I would like to appeal to the people to come and vote for the candidates of their choice. It is not good for people to engage in pulling others down.

Those who are making calls to us about people being killed hear and there should stop it. Nobody is killed anywhere", he said. On the general apathy demonstrated by the people towards the local government election, Egba claimed that the BYSIEC carried out awareness campaigns on Radio Bayelsa months before the 3 April, 2010 , local government election date.

Egba could not confirm the capsizing of the Brassbound boat just as he denied that voting did not take place at Nembe and Sagbama. Ekeremor local government area had been a flashpoint of electoral violence in the state. Last November, during the PDP-conducted primaries for council election, over 35 persons sustained varying degrees of injuries after supporters of the governor and his deputy allegedly clashed in Ekeremor and Sagbama local government areas, all in Bayelsa West Senatorial District.

Igoniko Oduma, Yenagoa

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