

# specialreport.

## 2015 elections: The cost, the losses

Many Nigerians who were adversely affected during the 2015 general election are still counting their losses. What did the elections cost in terms of human, economic and material losses? Our correspondents report.



An accident in Ogun State in which policemen were injured

### Rivers

#### Dapo Falade - Port-Harcourt

**T**HE 2015 general election may have had come and gone but the ripples of the electoral exercise are still reverberating across the polity, even as the fate of some of the winners in the elections still hangs in the balance, subject to the outcome of the various petitions laid before the election petitions tribunals that are commencing sitting across the country soon. Rivers State was not an exemption in the intrigues that played out before, during and even after the elections. The state, in the course of the elections, could be described as one of the most tension-soaked during the exercise. Indeed, living up to its billing as one of the flash points, the build up to the elections in the state was characterised by violence, hate speeches, bombing, tearing and destruction of campaign posters and billboards and wanton destruction of properties.

Within less than two weeks in January alone, the people of Okrika town in Okrika Local Government Area witnessed what could be described as the worst electoral violence as the campaign ground of the All Progressives Congress (APC) governorship candidate in the state, Honourable Dakuku Peterside, was twice bombed by yet-to-be identified arsonists. There was also the bombing of the APC secretariat in Andoni Local Government Area. Within the same period, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) candidate, and now the state governor-elect, Chief Nyesom Wike, had a close shave with death as he narrowly escaped gun attack during his campaign tour of Abua/Odual Local Government Area.

In the course of the elections, there were reported shootings and killings, with the Rivers APC pointing fingers at PDP as being the mastermind of the violent acts. Cataloguing the party's tale of woes and experience during the election, Rivers APC chairman, Dr Davies Ikanya, last Monday, claimed that 19 of its members and supporters were either killed or beheaded during the April 11 governorship election in some parts of the state, especially in Ahoada East and Okrika local government areas. The APC chairman specifically accused the governor-elect and the wife of the president, Dame Patience Jonathan, of endangering peace in the state, through their alleged open support for political brigandage.

"Since the discredited governorship and House of Assembly elections in Rivers State, killers have swarmed on Ahoada East, hitting down their targets. Recently, Messrs Chigba Apollos and Chiezule German, both members of APC in the area, were shot dead in Ibarikpo Town by unknown gunmen. Apart from the killings, kidnappers are also on the prowl in Ahoada East targeting only APC members. The abduction of Chief Cassidy Ikegbidi, chairman of Ahoada East Local Government Area Caretaker Committee, on April 18, is one of the latest tragedies that have befallen APC. Others so far kidnapped by the PDP hoodlums are Mr Suleiman Atago from Ideoha in Ward 5 and Chidi Oji from Ihuowo Ward 10, respectively", he said.

However, the state chapter of PDP is not folding its arms, in respect of the accusations. The party leadership in the state had, at various times and on several occasions, claimed that the ruling party in the state was only crying

wolf where there was none and also trying to give a dog a bad name in order to hang it. The party leadership also absolved itself of any involvement in the alleged murders and attacks being carried out on APC members and supporters in the state. Speaking with Sunday Tribune in an interview, on Thursday, the chairman, Media Committee of the Rivers PDP Campaign Team, Mr Emma Okah, not only absolved the governor-elect and Mrs Jonathan of involvement in any of such act but also went ahead to inform that several PDP members and supporters had been attacked on various occasions. He said that, unlike APC which was making unsubstantiated allegations, PDP had been taking the path of law by reporting such incidents to the police, knowing that the allegation of murder or assassination was not a simple matter that should be left at the realm of speculations and conjectures.

"First and foremost, the allegation of killing of somebody by an ordinary person is not a simple matter. But it is worse and much serious when that allegation is leveled against a person who is in authority. We have been treading on the path of caution as a party; we don't just put the allegation of assassination or murder on innocent people. The reason is that we don't want to involve politics with some issues like death. We will allow the police to do their investigation. When the police do their investigation, the true act and the true suspects will be uncovered. Until that is done, as a lawyer, I find it very reluctant to begin to accuse Mr A or Mr B without evidence of murdering somebody because, like I said, murder is a very serious