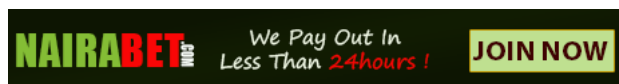


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Bloody election in Bayelsa (/bloody-election-in-bayelsa)

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As gov, minister trade blames over killings, violence

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A person allegedly injured by political thugs, being taken off a vehicle at a medical centre in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State capital, on Saturday.



governor, Hon. Seriake Dickson, claiming that 14 persons including soldiers and policemen died.

The Bayelsa State Police Command, however, told Sunday Tribune that “nobody died during the election,” noting that the election was peaceful and that the police were in control.

Speaking through the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), DSP Asinim Butswat, the police maintained that reports of killings were false, while noting that the command arrested two suspected thugs who were in their custody.

Official results of the election are expected to be announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), in the early hours of Sunday.

Sunday Tribune findings showed that series of violent acts and allegations of snatching of election materials marred the supplementary election in Southern Ijaw Local Government and other 101 units in Sagbama, Nembe, Yenagoa and Ogbia local governments.

The killings were reportedly at Ekeremor, Nembe and Yenagoa.

Dickson condemns violence, killings

Governor Dickson, in a statement by his Chief Press Secretary, Daniel Iworiso-Markson, condemned “the electoral malpractice and violence, which marred the supplementary elections in Brass, Nembe, Ekeremor town and parts of Southern Ijaw Local Government Area.”

The governor also accused APC chieftains of “masterminding the killings of innocent Bayelsans in Brass, Ekeremor, Nembe and Southern Ijaw and wondered why the APC would kill to capture power.”

While reiterating his earlier stance that the APC was not ready for one man, one vote, the governor said the violence also vindicated him on his earlier position that the security agencies particularly, the Nigeria military, were partisan and not willing to provide the enabling environment for a free and fair election to take place.

The statement claimed that “over 14 people were feared dead, saying four of them were policemen, two soldiers and eight civilians in Ekeremor alone. Many PDP members were also attacked in Brass and Southern Ijaw and are in critical conditions at the Federal Medical Centre, Yenagoa,” the statement further claimed.

APC accuses PDP of snatching ballot boxes

A senior military officer was also accused of snatching ballot boxes in Ekeremor, with eyewitnesses alleging that pandemonium broke out following an alleged invasion by armed men led by the reported military officer to snatch election materials in the area.

The military officer, who was said to be of the rank of a Major, it was gathered, led armed youths to the area.

Comrade Preye Amba, an aide to the Minister of State for Agriculture, Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, confirmed the incident, saying: “The PDP, in concert with one Major (names withheld) came to carry away electoral materials from Ekeremor to Egbema Angalabiri. We have on record that the said major is on the pay roll of a known ex-militant leader bent on bringing down the APC in Bayelsa State.”

“We call on the military authorities to investigate the role of the said major because he took away the materials without any other escort provided either by the Police or the DSS.”

Voters in Okoroba home of the late Special Adviser to former President Goodluck Jonathan, Orono Douglas, on Saturday, raised the alarm over the hijack of election materials meant for their unit by thugs.

According to some of the voters, though only Unit 13 Ward 11 was cancelled in Okoroba community, the materials for the unit were hijacked at the point of distribution by political thugs allegedly in the presence of security agents and the police.

Gift Douglas, a lawyer, confirmed that the thugs also attacked and beat up a traditional chief, Etulankimor Douglas Eteli, to stupor in front of security agents, saying: “The materials for Okoroba community is now in Nembe and they are thumb-printing for the APC.”

Shootings in communities

Voting in Ekeowe and Famgbe communities of Southern Ijaw and Yenagoa Local Government areas was delayed beyond noon due to sporadic shooting and security threats by armed thugs in the area, with accreditation and voting yet to begin after 11.30.

In Famgbe community, armed men reportedly invaded the venue of voting to scare away the voters with gunshots.

Election materials meant for Lobia 1, 2, 3 and Peremabiri units, among others, were hijacked by militants wielding AK 47 and other dangerous weapons, with a building belonging to a PDP chieftain, Chief James Jephthah, a.k.a. Octopus, reportedly set on fire by political thugs, who chased voters out of the community.

Lokpobiri debunks alleged shooting, killing of 10

Also reacting to the claim that 10 persons were killed, Senator Lokpobiri debunked the claim by some PDP loyalists that there were heavy shootings in Ekeremor town, which led to the alleged killing of two soldiers and two civilians.

The minister, speaking through his aide, Amba, said though the claim had been traced to some PDP apologists, the conduct of the election in Ekeremor was peaceful, orderly and without violence.

Impressive voters turnout, as observers, voters commend card reader performance

The election, despite fears of large scale violence, recorded an impressive turnout of voters in most units in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area and some other units where the supplementary poll was conducted.

With adequate presence of security personnel and electoral officials, the exercise began at all the polling units in Anyama Primary School, Anyama-Ijaw, Ward 2, at 9.30 a.m.

The exercise was also smooth in other units in the ward.

Delay in distribution of materials within Ward 4 caused the exercise to commence at about 10 a.m. in the area.

At Peremabiri, where polling was being conducted at the Town Hall, the card reader was also functioning, with the voters taking their turns in accreditation and balloting.

However, the exercise was yet to commence at Odenwari community, Ward 3, at 10.15 a.m. as materials were still awaited in spite of large presence of voters as well as security personnel.

Meanwhile, voters and election observers who participated in the poll commended the performance of card readers deployed for the exercise.

The voters, who spoke to the NAN in some of the polling stations, commended INEC for correcting the lapses, which the card readers recorded in the December 5 exercise.

Soldiers arrest ballot box-snatching suspects

Two persons suspected to be agents of one of the political parties involved in the supplementary governorship election were arrested for allegedly snatching a ballot box.

NAN maintained that the suspects were arrested by soldiers at Otuokpoti Unit 1, Ward 2, Ogbia Local Government Area, where the box was allegedly snatched, with the suspects said to have forcefully carried the ballot box while polling was ongoing at the unit.

The incident caused pandemonium at the unit but after the suspects were taken away, accreditation and voting resumed, NAN stated.

The police in Bayelsa said it had commenced investigation on the alleged snatching of ballot box during the election.

The police spokesperson, Buswat, confirmed to the NAN in Yenagoa that the two suspects were arrested for forcefully removing the box at Otuokpoti, Unit 1, Ward 2, Ogbia Local Government Area, saying: "As we speak, two suspects who snatched the ballot box are in our custody. We have commenced investigation on the incident. So far, we have not received report of any incident since the election began early today in Southern Ijaw Local Government Area and other polling units in other parts of the state," he said.

Buswat said police team leader for the election, Mr Hashim Argungu, a Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG), accompanied by heads of other security agencies and one INEC commissioner, visited some polling units.

"The team visited Agudama-Epetiama community in Yenagoa Local Government Area, with three polling units. The situation was calm and reports from other polling units say all was calm," he said.

The spokesman said that the command was in control of the situation and that personnel deployed for the election were effectively monitoring areas assigned to them.

PDP thanks Bayelsans for their resilience

The PDP has, however, praised the people of Southern Ijaw and others in the remaining 101 units for their steadfastness.

Speaking through Dickson's Restoration Campaign Organisation's Director of Publicity, Jonathan Obuebite, who was full of joy, noting that the party was cruising to victory in the supplementary election, the PDP commended the display of courage by Bayelsans.

"I want to appreciate the people of Southern Ijaw local government areas, and those in the other 101 polling units, as they listened to our call that they must not allow anybody to intimidate them, as they step out to exercise their civic responsibilities."

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