

NEWS

Another bloody election: Killings, ballot paper snatching mar poll nationwide

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JUST like the Presidential and National Assembly election of February 23, 2019, the governorship and state Houses of Assembly election held in 29 out of the 36 states of the country, on Saturday, was characterised by killings, vote-buying, ballot box snatching and arson, as well as voter apathy.

The election, which took place across the country, was supposed to retool the states with new political leadership.

Amidst the presence of security agencies, hoodlums working for some political parties stormed polling units that were deemed to be strongholds of their opponents and unleashed terror on voters, even as well-meaning Nigerians, again, decried the intimidating presence of soldiers in Rivers, Bayelsa, Kwara, Akwa Ibom.

In yesterday's election, at least eight persons were reportedly killed in election-related killings in Rivers, Benue, Oyo and Ondo, while an official of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was abducted in Sokoto State.

In Oyo State, a member of the House of Representatives, Honourable Temitope Olatoye aka Sugar, was shot by suspected gunmen.

Sunday Tribune learnt that gunmen dressed in military uniform and thugs went on the loose in some states, killing and burning down election materials amid cases of failure of smart card readers and other forms of electoral malfeasance.

The killings were despite the heavy military deployment ordered by the Federal Government, to stave off brigandage.

In Sokoto State, an Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) was killed while escorting election materials for the election in one of the local Government area of Sokoto State.

There were reports ballot snatching in Niger, Ebonyi and Edo states, while a huge sum of money meant for vote-buying was intercepted in Benue and Kano states.

Father, son killed in Benue
On Friday, few hours to the election, gunmen killed a man and his son in Guma Local Government Area of Benue State, as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) rescheduled

the Governorship and House of Assembly election in Gwer, Gboko and Tarka Local Government Areas of Benue.

The deceased were said to have been killed at a community near Gbamjinba, headquarters of the local government.

In the same vein, hoodlums were said to have burnt down election materials at Mbalom in Gwer Local Government Area of the state.

The materials were said to have been kept at a primary school in the community.

Dr Nentawe Yilwatda, the INEC Resident Electoral Commissioner in the state, who confirmed this to newsmen on Saturday in Makurdi, however, did not say when the polls would hold.

He said the council wards where elections did not hold were Mbalom in Gwer, Yandev North in Gboko and Manger 11 in Tarka local government areas.

The **News Agency of Nigeria (NAN)** reported that electoral materials meant for Mbalom council ward were razed by suspected hoodlums in the early hours of Saturday, while in Tarka there were reports of violence in most polling units.

Confirming the killing of the two family members, Benue State governor, Samuel Ortom, told newsmen in Gbamjinba, on Saturday, after casting his vote at Ako polling centre, that "just yesterday night (Friday), some militants belonging to the opposition killed a father and his son in the local government. I have already communicated with the authority and I pray that these people will be apprehended."

"So far, with the report I have received, there is nothing to worry about except that in other local governments, I have heard of the burning of election materials in some wards but I think the security men are on top of situation," Ortom said.

Meanwhile, the governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Emmanuel Jime, commended INEC for the early arrival of election materials into the polling units, adding that there was an improvement in the conduct of governorship and state assembly election.

Another former chairman, police officer killed in Rivers

Another former council chairman of Andoni Local Government Area, Mrs Emilia Nte and a mobile police officer attached to ward 6 Unyeadu in the same local government were shot dead by unidentified gunmen.

This happened on the eve

of the elections, with report stating that the former local government chairman was whisked away by unknown gunmen at Egendem and killed immediately after she was dragged out from her vehicle in the community.

Emilia was said to have been killed by the same hoodlums that killed Monwan Etete in Asarama community, a neighbouring town to the community where Mrs Nte was killed on February 23 during the Presidential and National Assembly election.

The former chairman, who is currently the Special Adviser to Governor Nyesom Wike on Gender Matters was said to be on her way to her ward in Unyeadu where she was supposed to exercise her franchise in yesterday's governorship and state Assembly election.

She was said to have been killed when she failed to 'provide the money demanded from her for today elections in the ward.'

The killing of the police officer came immediately after Mrs Nte was killed in the area.

Bandits kidnap INEC official in Isa LG

An official of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), was on Saturday, reportedly kidnapped by suspected armed bandits in Dangwandu village, Gebe district of Isa Local Government Area of Sokoto State.

The Executive Secretary, Isa Local Government Council, Alhaji Muhammad Makoshi gave the hint while speaking with journalists who were on elections monitoring in the area.

He disclosed that the victim, Surajo Muhammad, who was the presiding officer in charge of the area, was kidnapped while on duty.

Makoshi said the incident was confirmed on Saturday morning when a call was put through to the victim's phone line but one of the kidnappers responded that the victim had been abducted.

Two reportedly killed in Ondo over ballot snatching

There was pandemonium in Oba Akoko area of Akoko South-West Local Government Area of Ondo State, when hoodlums suspected to be political thugs invaded the collation centre in the town, snatching ballot boxes during the House of Assembly election in the state.

The Public Relations Officer of the Ondo State Police Command, Mr. Femi Joseph, confirmed the incident, noting that two people died, while another one was un-

dergoing treatment at an undisclosed hospital.

He added that no fewer than 20 people had been arrested by the state police command across the state over electoral offences.

According to a source, the hoodlums invaded the collation centre and started shooting sporadically into the air to scare away electoral officers and the security agents at the centre.

He explained that the security agents, electoral officers and other party officials were caught unawares and had to run for dear lives.

He stated that the security agents at the collation centre engaged the hoodlums in a gun duel while the thugs took to their heels, saying "three of the hoodlums were shot during the gun duel."

He said two of the thugs died immediately while one was in critical condition and rushed to a nearby hospital but said the security agents at the collation centre were able to restore normalcy in the town.

The source, however, said some of the hoodlums regrouped and invaded the police station in the town, destroying three vehicles at the station to retaliate the death of their members.

Similarly, some people have been arrested at Arigidi Akoko, in Akoko North-West Local Government Area of the town while trying to snatch ballot boxes.

It was gathered that some hoodlums invaded Araromi area of Arigidi Akoko, which led to disruption of election in one of the polling units.

Onu decries election violence in Ebonyi

Minister of Science and Technology, Dr Ogbonnaya Onu, on Saturday, decried thuggery, hoodlums and snatching of ballot boxes in some parts of Ebonyi during the Governorship/State assembly election in the state.

Onu made the remarks shortly after casting his vote on at the Market Square Polling unit 003, Uburu, Ohazara Local Government Area of the state, at 12:06 p.m.

The minister told newsmen that the violence was perpetrated by sponsored political thugs in most voting centres in the area.

The APC governorship candidate in Ebonyi State, Senator Sonni Ogbuoi, at about 10:50 a.m. voted in his Okenkwa polling unit 003, Ebuwana community in Afikpo South Local Government Area.

He expressed confidence that his party would win the election in the state.

Ladoja worried over reports of ballot box snatching, tasks security agencies

A former governor of Oyo State, Senator Rashidi Ladoja, expressed displeasure at the incidence of ballot box snatching in some parts of the state during Saturday's governorship and House of Assembly election.

Ladoja, who spoke with newsmen after casting his vote at 11:10 a.m. at his Ward 10 Unit 13 A and B Polling Unit in Ibadan North Local Government Area, said there were reported incidents of ballot snatching at Ojaigbo, Agbeni and Iwo road.

The former governor, who is a chieftain of Zenith Labour Party (ZLP), which was one of the parties that went into a coalition with the PDP in the state, called on security agencies to urgently address the situation.

Kogi CP deploys more policemen to curb ballot snatching

The Commissioner of Police in Kogi State, Mr Hakeem Busari, on Saturday, sent police reinforcement to some parts of Lokoja where armed hoodlums snatched some ballot boxes during the Gov-

ernorship/House of Assembly election.

Busari, who confirmed the attack on a polling unit in Lokoja, told **NAN** on telephone in Lokoja that some policemen had been mobilised to the troubled spots.

The commissioner said that he had started moving about with other heads of security agencies to see the situation first hand.

He also denied insinuations that some policemen were involved in ballot snatching and conveying same in their vans to government facilities for thumb printing.

Thugs invade Oshiomhole's stronghold, burn ballot papers

Suspected political thugs, on Saturday, invaded a polling centre in Ogbido, Etsako West Local Government Area of Edo State, shooting sporadically into the air.

Several potential voters were injured in the mayhem as they scamped away during the invasion by the masked hoodlums who came in from the bush, shooting.

The national chairman of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Comrade Adams Os-

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House of Reps member, Olatoye Sugar, killed in Ibadan

•Seyi Makinde reacts

A member of the House of Representatives representing Lagelu/Akinyele Federal Constituency, Olatoye Sugar, has been confirmed dead at the University College Hospital (UCH).

The politician was said to have been rushed to the hospital's accident and emergency unit in a critical condition after he was shot on the head.

The hospital's Public Relations Officer, Mr Teye Akinrinola, who confirmed the incident, said the politician who had initially received treatment at the accident and emergency had died from his injury.

Earlier, a source claimed that Olatoye, was rushed to the hospital's Emergency Section around 5 p.m., having been shot on his way back from Oyedeji village of Lagelu Local Government, where he had gone to vote.

But one of his aides who spoke to **Sunday Tribune** on a condition of anonymity, said the lawmaker was shot by assailants reportedly dressed in military uniforms, noting that he was specifically targeted in the attack.

In a related development, unconfirmed reports stated

that two other individuals were killed in Eleta and Akanran areas of Ibadan South-East and Egbeda local governments.

While the deceased in Eleta was allegedly shot, the man killed in Akanran was reportedly beaten with amulets.

Reacting to the tragedy, the PDP gubernatorial candidate in Oyo State, Mr Seyi Makinde, has described the murder of the Action Democratic Party (ADP) senatorial candidate in Oyo Central as a massive setback for democracy in the country.

In a statement signed on his behalf by Prince Dotun Oyelade, Makinde said that "no political position is worth the life of any human being no matter his station in life."

He said that the whole nation should rise in one voice to insist on finding out the circumstances that led to the gruesome murder of the lawmaker.

Makinde, while commiserating with the family of the slain lawmaker and the people of Oyo State, urged the security agencies to fish out his killers and ensure that justice is served.