

Oyo crisis: Five persons still missing, new chairmen in hiding

AKIN OYEDELE

FOUR days after the controversial local government election held in Oyo State, the whereabouts of five persons allegedly abducted by rival political party supporters are still unknown. But another person was feared killed in Kisi on Friday.

No fewer than 20 suspects are currently in police custody in connection with the mayhem, which lasted till Friday when the elected chairmen were inaugurated.

Our correspondent gathered that most of the chairmen had gone underground for fear of being attacked.

Normalcy, however, appeared to have returned to Ibadan, the state capital on Saturday, as commercial activities resumed, while roads that were earlier deserted were busy.

Among the five missing persons were two supporters of the outgoing Governor of the state, Alhaji Rashidi Ladoja, while sources said the three others were members of the Peoples Democratic Party.

According to a top security source, who confided in our correspondent, the supporters of the governor were among the four who were abducted in Ibadan on Thursday and taken to the residence of a PDP leader.

The PDP supporters were reportedly declared missing by their leaders after the skirmish receded on Saturday.

The PDP, under the leadership of Alhaji Lamidi Adedibu and the Governor-elect, Chief Adebayo Alao-Akala, had kicked against the conduct of the election, citing its closeness to the handover date and the ill-preparedness of the party.

The party had joined forces with 11 others, under the aegis of Conference of Nigeria Political Parties, to challenge before an Ibadan High Court, the decision of the State Independent Electoral Commission to conduct the election.

The trial judge, Justice Iyabo Yerima, had granted an interim order restraining the commission from conducting the election pending the hearing and determination of the originating summon before her.

The state Commissioner for Justice and Attorney-General, Mr. Bayo Shitu, however, told a news conference that Justice Yerima's order had become abated and was no longer binding in law following the transfer of the suit to Justice Munta Abimbola, who started the case de novo

(afresh).

The state's Commissioner of Police, Mr. Jonathan Johnson, confirmed the arrests and the fresh killing recorded in Kisi, in a telephone interview with our correspondent on Saturday.

According to him, the police had refrained from mass arrest of suspects in order not to aggravate the tense security situation in the state.

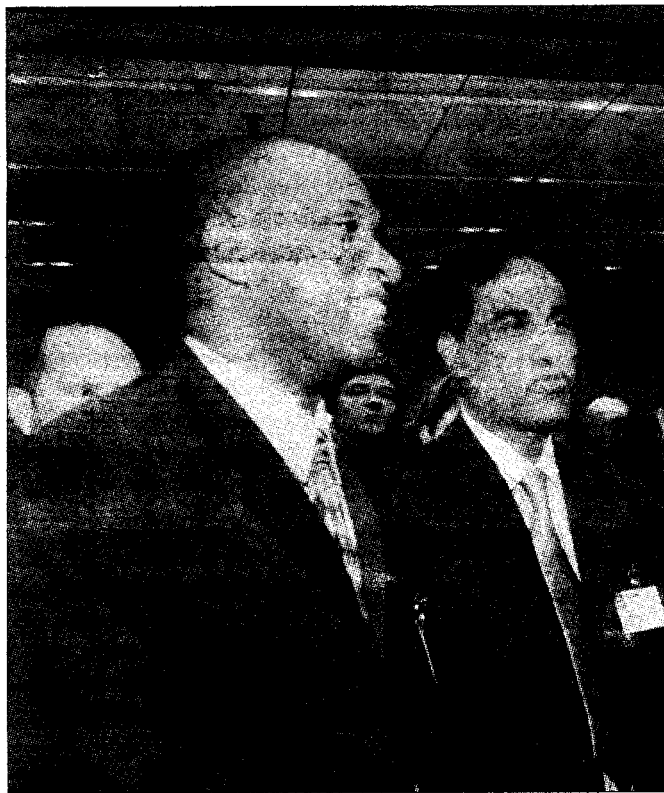
The CP said, "We heard that two people were abducted in Ibadan on Thursday, but nobody has come forward with any information. When I called their people, they were not forthcoming. So, I can only confirm three.

"We have also arrested at least 20 people in Okeho, Eruwa and other parts of the

state. We have released those not found with guns because of the public holiday, while those found with ammunition are being detained. We will charge them to court after the holidays."

Meanwhile, the new Chairman of Oluyole Local Government, Mr. Kehinde Olaosebikan, said most of his colleagues had to go underground because Ibadan was under the siege of political thugs.

Olaosebikan, who was the Chief Press Secretary to a former Governor of the state, Alhaji Lam Adesina, was optimistic that there would be a new era by the time the President-elect, Alhaji Umaru Sheu Yar'Adua took over the reins of power on Tuesday.



•Former US President, Mr. Bill Clinton, sharing a joke with who represented Asiwaju Bola Tinubu at the 2nd Summit New York ... recently.

PDP expels sen

VICTOR SAM

THE Peoples Democratic Party on Saturday in Abuja wielded the big stick by expelling 34 persons from its fold.

Those expelled included Senator Patrick Osakwe of Delta State, Barr. Joseph Abang of Cross River, Hon. Okey Odey, Anambra State, Senator Ehinlanwo, Ondo, and Emmanuel Obot of Akwa Ibom State.

The party said their expulsion was based on acts of indiscipline and anti-party

activities, "which had brought disrepute to the party."

A statement signed by the PDP National Publicity Secretary, Mr John Odey, and made available to our correspondent said all the 34 persons had been delisted from the party's register in their various wards.

The expelled persons are Chief Emeka Uzor, Imo; Mr Joel Ikenya, Taraba; Francis Duniya, Kaduna; Keluo Molokwu, Anambra; Eyo Egbai, Cross River; Tom Zakari, Kogi; and John Fashogbon, Osun; Deinghan