

Scores killed in Rivers, Gombe

...as blasts rock Anambra, Enugu

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TENSION heightened in Rivers, Anambra and Enugu states on Saturday following bombings, killings and arrests in some polling units.

In Rivers State, a soldier and two civilians were shot dead by suspected political thugs at polling centres in Ozuoha and Kpitem in Ikwerre and Tai Local Government Areas of the state.

Sources said the gunmen opened fire where prospective voters had gathered for accreditation and that a bullet hit the soldier, who died on the spot.

Brigade Commander, 2 Brigade, Bori Camp, Port Harcourt, Koko Essien, confirmed the incident when he spoke with Amaechi in Ubima.

One of the civilians, Sampson Wona, was said to have been shot dead while waiting to be accredited at a polling unit in Ozuoha.

The second civilian, who like Wona, was a member of the APC, was killed in Kpitem, Tai LGA.

Shortly after these incidents, the APC in the state alleged that scores of its members were killed, 100 arrested and many disenfranchised.

It said in a statement by Chukwuemeka Eze, the Senior Special Assistant, Media and Public Affairs to the State chairman, that the killings were carried out in Kpitem and other parts of the state by hoodlums suspected to be acting for the PDP.

The party attached photographs of the slain persons to the statement to prove its claim.

The statement read, "Today's (Saturday)

presidential and National Assembly elections have turned out to be a big nightmare for the APC in Rivers State, with the members being killed, attacked and disenfranchised in various parts of the state.

"Armed militias working for the PDP have intensified their killings of APC members. Scores have already been killed and several others marked for elimination.

"This (Saturday) morning in Kpitem town, Tai Ward 2 and other areas of the state, five people were shot dead by PDP's armed militia, and that was before accreditation commenced.

"It is sad that the PDP and its collaborators are targeting APC strongholds and chieftains for attacks and killings. To intimidate our people and contrary to the court ruling forbidding the use of the Army in this elections, there has been a massive deployment of soldiers in the state with clear instruction to shoot at sight any APC agent that refuses to comply with the evil plot of the PDP to write the results of the election at some designated areas of the state in favour of the PDP."

The statement claimed that a former Commissioner and an APC leader, Chidiebere Okwuolu, was arrested by the police and taken to Olu Obasanjo Police Station in Port Harcourt.

It added that 99 other APC members and leaders were being held in various police stations in the state.

The party also said that at Ubima, result sheets were "currently with Nyesom Wike, the PDP governorship candidate for the state."

The Director of Communication, Greater Together

Organisation, Ibim Semenitari, condemned the development, lamenting that some APC leaders in the state had also been marked for elimination.

Semenitari, in her statement said, "Armed militias working for the PDP have intensified their killings of APC members. Scores have already been killed and several others marked for elimination.

"Specifically, the PDP armed men target APC strongholds for attack using heavy gunfire. The Greater Together Campaign Organisation, the campaign outfit for Dr. Dakuku Peterside, has condemned this visit of terror on the state.

"On Saturday morning in Kpitem Town, Tai Ward 2, two people were shot dead by the PDP armed militia, and that was before accreditation commenced."

But the state Publicity Secretary of the PDP, Samuel Nwanosike, told *SUNDAY PUNCH* that his party members were not interested in attacking or killing anybody to win elections.

Nwanosike described the claim of the APC as mere propaganda, adding that while the PDP had been working hard to win elections, the APC had been making frivolous allegations.

In Enugu, there was a bomb blast at the polling unit located inside WTC Primary School, Enugu North LGA at about 9am on Saturday.

The source of the explosion which made many prospective voters to flee was not known as of 8pm.

In Anambra State, voters who came for accreditation in the morning at Ayomna Okpala Primary School in Awka scampered for safety following a bomb explosion there.

No casualties were

recorded in the incident but the school building was badly damaged.

One of the eyewitnesses, Chinenye Ibe, said they were shocked when the explosion occurred and disrupted the exercise.

Earlier, there was an explosion at Onitsha South which eyewitnesses said injured a number of persons.

The Women Coordinator, National Presidential Campaign of the PDP, Joy Emordi, said the Onitsha South blast was unfortunate.

She called on the indigenes, electoral officials and monitors in the state to be vigilant.

The Secretary of Anambra State Government, Oseloka Obazie, told one of our correspondents in an interview, that he was yet to get an independent confirmation of the blasts.

He said, "I pray these do not derail the electoral process here. Anambra State is a very peaceful state and I don't know why these are happening."

Obazie, however, assured Anambra indigenes that the government of the state was on top of the situation.

The elections however claimed some lives in Gombe State where a member of the House of Assembly, Umar Aminu, and eight others were feared killed by Boko Haram insurgents in Dukku and Nafada LGAs.

On Friday night, the insurgents killed 25 persons and injured 30 others in a community in the southern part of Borno State.

Borno State Governor, Alhaji Kashim Shettima, who lamented the incident, added that several houses were also razed by the terrorists.