

Two killed, five injured as hoodlums attack APC secretariat

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Simon Utebor, Yenagoa

Two persons were on Friday confirmed dead and five others injured following an attack on the secretariat of the Bayelsa State chapter of the All Progressives Congress.

The secretariat, which is located on the Yenagoa-Mbiama Road, Yenezue-Gene area of Yenagoa, was reportedly attacked at about 11am by suspected armed thugs.

The assailants were allegedly hired to disrupt the inauguration of the acting chairman of the party, Joseph Fafi.

The national body of the party had appointed Fafi to the position following the expulsion of the former chairman, Chief Tiwei Orunimighe; his deputy, Eddy Julius; and the party's secretary, Marlin Daniel, over alleged anti-party activities.

One of the persons killed in the violence was said to be a member of the APC from Sagbama Local Government Area, while the other victim was said to have been a passerby caught in the crossfire.

It was learnt that trouble started when a group loyal to Orunimighe allegedly went to the secretariat to protest against the change in leadership.

But it was gathered that while they were at the gate, chanting songs, another group loyal to the state's party leader and former governor, Chief Timipre Sylva, confronted them. A clash between the two groups reportedly followed.

Some journalists at the event, including a reporter for the Silverbird Television/Rhythm FM station, Jesse Ese, were injured while trying to scale the barbed wire fence of the party's secretariat during the ensuing melee.

Ese lost most of his valuables as a crowd of persons stepped on him while running to escape from the violence.

As the shootings lasted, the entire area was thrown into pandemonium with business owners closing their shops and scampering for their safety.

Most persons within the APC secretariat jumped over the barbed wire fence out of panic and landed in swamps.

Security operatives deployed in the scene were said to have engaged the armed thugs and later repelled them.

The inauguration, however, proceeded as scheduled after peace returned to the secretariat.

Speaking on the development, the only APC member in the State House of Assembly, Mr. Isreal Sunny-Igoli, accused Orunimighe and an ex-militant leader of hiring thugs to attack the party.

Sylva described the attack on the party secretariat as cowardly and wicked and apologised to members, saying the perpetrators were too small to stop an APC event in the state.

But Oruminighe, who spoke via the telephone, said he was not a party to the violence, blaming it on the desperation of Sylva and the Minister of State for Agriculture, Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, to depose him.

Meanwhile, the Senior Special Assistant on Politics to Governor Seriake Dickson, Miriki Ebikibina, has described the event as unfortunate, regrettable and totally unacceptable.

Ebikibina said, “The violence and the pandemonium caused are regrettable because they are coming a day after the meeting of the Acting President, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, with the state governors and security officers on hate speech and insecurity.”