

One dead, DSIEC office razed as Delta holds LG poll

THEOPHILUS OJOJEGHEN

VIOLENCE marred Saturday's Delta State council poll which left one person dead and three others injured.

The office of the state Independent Electoral Commission in the Ughelli North Local Government Area secretariat was also burnt by armed thugs.

The exercise was marred by alleged electoral irregularities in most council areas where the poll took place.

It was gathered that the electoral officer in charge of the council, Mr. Isaac Ajekoko, and other staff of the commission, including party agents, narrowly escaped being lynched and security operatives watched helplessly as thugs set the building on fire.

SUNDAY PUNCH gathered that a DSIEC adhoc staff was reportedly killed by the thugs at Onitsha-Ugbo in the Aniocha North Council Area of the state.

But the state police command denied the report, saying the deceased slumped and died during the election.

Our correspondent, who monitored the exercise in Warri, Udu, Uvwie, Sapele, Ughelli North and South, Ethiope East and West, and Isoko areas of the state, observed that voting in the areas was not devoid of mayhem.

In the Ughelli attack, a journalist with *Urhobo Voice* newspaper, Grandball Choice, and some others sustained injuries.

More than two persons were attacked and hospitalised in Ughelli South after thugs attacked them in Ogbe-Ijoh, headquarters of Warri South-West. The immediate younger brother to Chief Ayiri Emami, Thomas, was also beaten.

Thomas, an All Progressives Congress chieftain and a former leader of the Warri South-West legislative arm, told our correspondent that his phones and money were stolen by the thugs at Ogbe-Ijoh where he had gone to monitor the distribution of electoral materials.

Fulani herdsmen tainting Buhari's administration —ex-IYC leader

SIMON UTEBOR

A former President of the Ijaw Youth Council Worldwide, Mr. Udengs Eradiri, on Saturday, said Fulani herdsmen were, through their killings, staining the administration of their clansman, President Muhammadu Buhari.

Eradiri, who is the immediate past President of the council, in a telephone

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An APC chieftain in Oghara, Ethiope West Council Area, Loveace Ukutaire, was also attacked.

As of 1pm, election materials had not arrived in the polling booths at Uvwie, Ughelli South and Udu council areas.

In Udu council area, voters and officials of opposition parties refused to allow the distribution of electoral materials after they reportedly discovered that the council's returning officer had allegedly absconded with the original result sheets.

However, the exercise was relatively peaceful in

Warri-North, Warri-South and some parts of Warri South-West council areas, particularly in Abigborodo, where a former governor of the state, Dr. Emmanuel Uduaghan, and his wife, voted.

The exercise was also reportedly peaceful in Asaba and its environs but there was voter apathy in most polling units.

Speaking after voting, the state governor, Dr. Ifeanyi Okowa, admitted that there were some skirmishes in some parts of the state, but expressed satisfaction with the conduct of the poll.

The governor, who voted at Ward 3, Owa-Alero, Ika North-East

Local Government Area of the state, commended the DSIEC for the exercise, whose conduct was faulted by members of his party.

Okowa said, "We are confident that we are working with our people and they are in partnership with us. But more importantly, we have to obey the rules. The process is good so far. I got accredited and voted immediately and I can see other people in the queue waiting to be accredited and vote so that they can leave. This is unlike what we used to have in the past. I have had a few complaints across the state and I hope they are being resolved."

But the 2015

governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress in the state, Olorogun O'tega Emerhor, and the Ughelli North APC chairman, Olorogun Felix Ekure, called for the cancellation of the exercise, saying the state government had comprised electoral officers.

Emerhor said, "Two nights ago we had intelligence, particularly last night, that the sensitive materials would not be available for today (Saturday). In fact, we are aware from intelligence that they had started writing results for an election that had not been conducted. But as a responsible party,

we decided to wait till today to find out.

"And as it happened in Ughelli North, that was how it happened in Ughelli South, Uvwie, Udu and in the whole of the Central; no sensitive material arrived at any place. Delta North says the same thing. Even in Okowa's local government. In Delta North, no sensitive material was made available.

"I can confidently tell you that the strategy of the Okowa government in this election was not to conduct an election. It was clear that they were afraid of being defeated in the field and therefore decided to take away the sensitive materials."

Also, Ekure and the APC candidate in Uvwie, Mr. Ufuoma Okenini, said the party would not accept any results announced by the DSIEC.

A member of the APC caucus, Power Aginighan, said there was no election in the three councils of Bomadi, Patani and Burutu, alleging that materials meant for the exercise were diverted to an unknown location.

Aginighan stated, "I have it on good authority that, in an attempt to subvert the democratic will of the people, DSIEC officials assigned the responsibility to conduct the elections connived with the Peoples Democratic Party to rig the elections through a plot to fingerprint ballot papers in unknown locations and announce election results."

"I unequivocally condemn this primitive approach to politics and declare that the APC will reject any result that emanates from such a kangaroo process. I can categorically report that there was no election in Bomadi, Burutu and Patani LGAs."

A former National Deputy Chairman of the PDP and now a chieftain of the APC, Dr. Cairo Ojoughbo, said the election was a fraud, adding that it didn't hold in many polling units.

He blamed the state governor for allegedly instigating the irregularities, appealing to the state House of Assembly to commence the impeachment process of the governor.

The spokesperson for the police in the state, Mr. Andrew Aniamaka, described the exercise as generally peaceful despite the violence recorded in many council areas in the state.

Aniamaka added that an autopsy would be conducted on the dead DSIEC official to ascertain what caused his death.



•L-R: Chief Executive Officer, Colony Capital Ltd, Emeka Obiakor; Director, Cascades Luxury, Chike Meme; Strategic Business Group Head, UBA, Pamela Shodipo; Chief Executive Officer, Magnum and Hunter Ltd, Ade Adeogun; and Managing Partner, Global Law Alliance, Zubi Nvuke, during the relaunch of Cascades Luxury Oils and Fragrance, in Lagos... recently. Photo: Cascades

Nine MDAs risk zero allocation for shunning budget defence

ETIM EKPIMAH

POLITY

NINE ministries, departments and agencies in Akwa Ibom State risk zero allocation in the 2018 budget over the failure of their heads to appear before the state House of Assembly Committee on Appropriation and Finance for Defence.

The Chairman, House Committee on Finance and Appropriation, Dr. Usoro Akpanusoh, said this in Uyo during the ongoing budgetary appropriation

defence on Friday.

He said, "The consequence is that if those MDAs still fail to defend their estimates before the deadline on the ongoing budget defence exercise, the heads of the affected ministries, departments and agencies will have themselves to blame for denying their MDAs access to budgetary allocation to enable them run their establishments."

"Whereas other MDAs had since defended their

budgets before the House of Assembly Committee on Appropriation and Finance, the remaining MDAs, including the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, State Universal Basic Education Board, Ministry of Lands and Town Planning, Akwa Ibom Water Company Limited, and the Office of the Secretary to the State Government, have yet to defend their estimates even after the committee gave them another opportunity to do so."

Akpanusoh also named Akwa Ibom Hotels and

Tourism Board, Akwa Ibom Liaison Office, Abuja, College of Health Technology, Etinan, Akwa Ibom Investment Corporation as some of the MDAs whose heads refused to appear before the House to defend their budget.

It was learnt that the nine MDAs which failed to honour earlier invitations were later asked to appear for the defence on Thursday.

SUNDAY PUNCH gathered that only the Ministry of Transport and Petroleum Resources was received and screened by the committee, while the Ministry of Economic Development came late.

He said SUBEB and the School of Health Technology, Etinan, sent letters of excuse from the exercise, saying there were no letters or any information from others.

Akpanusoh, who faulted the attitude of the affected MDAs, warned that his committee was empowered to recommend zero allocation to any MDA that fail to appear for the defence of their budgetary proposals.

clansman's government.

On Benue killings, the former IYC President urged Buhari to talk to his Fulani brothers on the need to embrace peace and stop the violence.

Eradiri said, "President Buhari must sit up. The Fulani people, a stock where the President comes from, cannot be doing what they are doing without the support of some highly-placed individuals."

He alleged that the Fulani leaders were committing a conspiracy of silence by allowing the herdsmen to engage in violence against the country.

Eradiri argued that when an Ijaw clansman, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, was the President of the country, leaders in the Niger Delta, including himself, supported him to stop the crisis in the region in order to avoid jeopardising their

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interview with our correspondent, wondered why Fulani herdsmen were on a killing spree at a time their leader is the President of the country.

He lamented that the herdsmen, by their violent disposition, had cast doubts on the ability of Buhari to achieve one of his cardinal campaign promises — security.