

Killings, BVAS, ballot box snatching mar polls

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THE Presidential and National Assembly elections were held nationwide on Saturday but they were marred by violence in many parts of the country.

The situation led to the loss of lives and disruption of the voting process in many areas.

In some areas, the Independent National Electoral Commission postponed elections till today (Sunday) over violence.

Stolen BVAS

The INEC Chairman, Prof Mahmood Yakubu, stated while briefing journalists on the situation report in Abuja that some BVAS machines were snatched from electoral officials.

Yakubu said insecurity in some states led to the delay experienced in some areas.

The INEC chairman, who said polling units in Niger, Delta and Katsina states were attacked by thugs and eight BVAS were snatched by thugs, noted that three of the BVAS machines were later recovered.

He said, "Another contributing factor to the late opening of polling units is the perennial insecurity in the country. For instance, we could not deploy early enough to Alawa in the Shomolu Local Government Area of Niger State."

"Bandits launched an attack, not necessarily on INEC offices or facilities, but in the area. With the advice of the security agencies, we waited a while, but I am happy to say that we were able to deploy to Alawa, and voting in that location is ongoing as we speak."

"Similarly, in the Oshimili LGA of Delta State, thugs attacked a polling unit and two BVAS machines were lost in the process. But again, determined that the election must continue, we were able to replace the stolen BVAS machine, reinforce security agencies and voting continued in that polling unit."

TODAY IN HISTORY

February 26

February 26, 1616

- Roman Inquisition delivers injunction to Galileo demanding he abandon his belief in heliocentrism, which states the Earth and planets revolve around the Sun

February 26, 1852

- John Harvey Kellogg, American surgeon, co-created Corn flakes was born on this day

February 26, 1885

- Berlin Conference gives Congo to Belgium and Nigeria to Great Britain

February 26, 1909

- A colour motion picture is shown to the general public for the first time. A series of 21 short Kinemacolor films were presented at the Palace Theatre in London.

February 26, 1917

- The world's first jazz record is created. The "Original Dixieland Jass Band" recorded "Livery Stable Blues" for the Victor Talking Machine Company in New York.

February 26, 1935

- RADAR (Radio Detection and Ranging) first demonstrated by Robert Watson-Watt

February 26, 1991

- The world's first web browser is presented to the public. The browser "WorldWideWeb" (later renamed "Nexus") was developed by Tim Berners-Lee, a British computer scientist best known as the inventor of the internet.

unit.

"Similarly, in Safana LGA of Katsina State, thugs attacked one of our voting locations and snatched six BVAS machines. But again, we were able to recover and use the spare BVAS machines and reinforce security for voting to continue in that location. Happily, security agencies have recovered the BVAS machines but three are still held by the thugs."

Yakubu noted that the attacks by these thugs were targeted at the BVAS.

Lagos State

On Dopolubi Street in the Surulere area of Lagos, a woman, Efidi Bina Jennifer, was allegedly stabbed by thugs loyal to a political party at the polling unit. She, however, came back to cast her vote after being given first aid treatment and wearing heavy bandage on her face and dripping with blood.

Her picture and video went viral on social media with some Nigerians commending her resolve and raising money for her.

Her younger sister, Bina said, "We have taken her to the hospital but she is resting now. We have not reported it to the police but they visited her at the hospital."

A polling unit outside the Oba Elegushi Palace at Ikate in Epe, Lekki, was attacked by thugs.

The hoodlums carted away ballot boxes and chased away electoral officers.

A resident of the area, who spoke on condition of anonymity said, "The information I'm getting is that violence erupted outside the Oba's palace."

"The ballot boxes were snatched and everybody ran away. Thugs are still hanging around the area."

Also, a popular tweep, Samuel Oigba, who voted in the polling unit inside the palace wrote on Twitter, "The vote outside the palace was scattered by area boys. Ballot box jacked (hijacked). (Thugs) chased the presiding officer away."

"They just physically assaulted @EdiEffiong because he was videotaping the whole thing. He tried running into the palace when they saw and chased him but they locked the gate. This is madness. The police officers here just stood & did nothing. They took his phone & deleted the video."

"Was outside when they chased and assaulted @EdiEffiong, tried recording but they are beating anyone recording here & taking your phone if they spot you. Area dey hot."

Rivers State

A pregnant woman identified as Ruth Oshah, and a member of a local security outfit, Mark Oritime, were allegedly killed at a polling unit in the Ubimimi community, Emohua Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Oritime was said to be a member of the Emohua Local Vigilante Service codenamed EMOLVIS.

The incident was said to have occurred in Ward 12 in Emohua LGA, where houses were also burnt.

The incident caused pandemonium in the area and temporarily halted the elections.

Speaking to journalists, the President, Ubimimi Youth Council, Ikechukwu Wordu, condemned the incident, saying the community had been peaceful before the polls.

"The situation in my community today (Saturday) during the presidential election was said," Wordu said.

He claimed that trouble started when a boy, who was armed with a gun, started chasing people around.

Wordu stated, "The boy wanted to recruit some other boys. Then, he brought out a pump action (gun) and started chasing people around. The security outfit in the community went to look for him today."

"It was unfortunate that as a result of an accidental discharge by the security outfit, a pregnant woman, Ruth Oshah, was killed."

Angered by the incident, he said some youths descended on the vigilante.

"Some youths moved in, chased and killed the EMOLVIS vigilante. I had to call on security agencies in the area and also called on the youth to stop any illegal re-enforcement by moving around to burn people's houses."

"For now, the Divisional Police Officer of the Egheda Police Division has arrived in Ubimimi. One EMOLVIS man was injured. Two houses of EMOLVIS members were burnt."

The spokesperson for the state police command, Grace Iringe-Koko, confirmed the incident but said it was not related to the elections.

"Preliminary investigation revealed that it was not related to the elections. The investigation is ongoing," she said.

Taraba State

The Taraba State Police Command's Public Relations Officer, DSP Usman Abdullahi, on Saturday confirmed the killing of one person in the early hours of the day.

Abdullahi told journalists that during a patrol to enforce the restriction of movement, policemen flagged down a motorcycle, who refused to stop and he was shot in the process.

"Information available to me revealed that personnel on patrol this morning flagged down a young man riding on a motorcycle, but he refused to stop and they shot at him," he said.

Akwa Ibom State

Hoodlums suspected to be supporters of a political party in Akwa Ibom State inflicted machete cuts on two voters before carting away a Bi-Modal Voter Accreditation Machine System machine for units 11 and 12 at the Onjong West Ward I in the Onna Local Government Area of the state.

A source told one of our correspondents that the victims were rushed to an undisclosed hospital.

The source said, "Some hoodlums stormed units 11 and 12 at the Onjong West Ward I in the Onna Local Government Area of the state and hijacked one BVAS machine. They inflicted machete cuts on two of their victims before escaping into the bush."

"The victims have been taken to hospital in the Onna LGA for treatment."

The Chairman of the Onna LGA, Iniabasi Ekanem, who confirmed the incident, however, said it was being handled by security agencies.

"We have a little issue; we expected it but it depends on the way we manage it. The security officers stationed in the area helped to quell the situation," he said.

However, when contacted the state Police Public Relations Officer, SP Odiko MacDon, denied the incident.

Also, voting in Unit 1, Ward 10, Ikot Ekom Primary School, Itu Local Government Area of the state was halted following a crisis that erupted among party agents.

Voters were seen scrambling for safety as the corps members manning the unit parked the electoral materials and stood in a corner waiting to be rescued.

The police official attached to the unit was overwhelmed by the pandemonium and left the scene on a motorcycle.

The policewoman later came back with her colleagues to restore order.

Edo State

Thugs snatched ballot boxes and voting materials at the Oredo Ward 4 Unit 42 on Butcher Street, Benin, Edo State, and chased away the polling officials, who took cover in a house on Lagos Street.

One of the security agents attached to the unit said the attackers came with guns to take away the materials as the officials were settling down for the day's job.

She said, "I am one of the security officials at the unit. As the officials were getting ready to commence voting, the armed boys stormed the polling unit and made away with the electoral materials."

"The officials took to their heels and took cover at the popular Oshola House on Lagos Street. Surprisingly, the police

came and took away Kelvin Adu and Idoghwa Oshola, who were protecting us and the polling officials from being attacked."

INEC officials, however, went to the polling unit of Governor Godwin Obaseki, who promised that the issue would be looked into.

Obaseki said, "We need to reconfirm that story. It doesn't make sense to snatch a ballot box that doesn't have ballot papers in it. We will check that and verify. But I am confident because we made adequate preparations to ensure that every polling unit has at least five security personnel."

"It is too early to make any conclusive statement two hours into voting. We are going to go round and see what is going on across the state and polling centres."

Kogi State

Violence and harassment of voters marred the election in Kogi State.

One of our correspondents, who monitored the elections in parts of the state, reports that the violence also led to the loss of lives in some areas.

At the Odaba polling unit in Dekina Ward, Ogege Road, voters fled from the voting area as thugs came in large numbers to destroy voting materials.

The thugs, who appeared with machetes and guns, snatched ballot boxes, broke chairs and dispersed voters.

One of the political thugs was, however, gunned down by soldiers.

Bayelsa State

The voting process was disrupted at the GSS polling unit in Ofoni in the Saghama Local Government Area, the hometown of the Bayelsa State Deputy Governor, Lawrence Ewurudjakpo, following pandemonium caused by gunshots fired by some irate youths.

Two women were reported to have sustained gunshot wounds.

However, two of the three irate youths were said to have been arrested by a mob and handed over to security operatives.

Voting resumed after normalcy was restored and Ewurudjakpo cast his vote at his Unit 6, Ward 2 in Ofoni around 10am.

Federal Capital Territory

There was palpable tension in the Dagari area of Gwagwalada as suspected political thugs destroyed 24 ballot boxes in eight polling units.

The affected polling units include 022, 021, 023 and 003 at Dagari Phase III by Venus Road open space.

Some of the others are 011, 012, 013, and 014 located close to the Wazobia Park by Madam Mercy Road open space.

It was gathered that the stick-wielding thugs, who rode on three motorcycles, carried out the attacks simultaneously.

An eyewitness, simply identified as Cecilia, said five of the thugs attacked some people in the area who had voted.

"I was standing here when five guys with sticks and knives attacked the ballot boxes and everybody ran away. They used sticks to hit the ballot boxes and left," she stated.

Another resident said the thugs carried out the attack because no security official was attached to the area.

Some thugs disrupted the voting process in the Dagari polling unit EC 30 A and EC 30 B, Gwagwalada, Federal Capital Territory.

An eyewitness told the News Agency of Nigeria that voting was already in progress when some thugs on motorcycles stormed the venue with weapons and scattered the ballot boxes.

He said security operatives were taken unawares as the polling stations were along the road.

Another eyewitness also told NAN that such violence had never happened before in the area.

NAN reports that the security operatives were not armed, hence the reason the thugs succeeded.

A large number of thugs stormed and destroyed ballot boxes at a voting centre in the Kayarda area of Kuje,

Abuja.

The thugs, who armed themselves with sticks and stones, arrived at the voting centre around 4pm.

There are four polling units at the centre, which is regarded as the largest in the area council.

At about 4:25pm, security operatives, including personnel of the Nigerian Army, arrived at the centre.

Angry voters threatened to rough handle officials of INEC following a change in venue of Polling Unit 018 in Apo area of the FCT.

Hiding behind security operatives, some of the ad hoc officials of the commission appealed for understanding, saying the initial venue was not approved by INEC.

According to them, the right location is Apo Resettlement Centre and not the Apo Primary School, where the officials and election materials were dropped.

Gombe State

The Gombe State Commissioner of Police, Oupa Etim, on Saturday confirmed Friday night's attack on INEC ad hoc workers at Tudun Wada Primary School.

Suspected thugs had invaded the school where the ad hoc workers comprising corps members and other participants were camped ahead of the elections.

Confirming the attack, Etim described it as unfortunate, adding that the staff members failed to get police protection but opted to settle in the venue earlier.

He said, "It is very unfortunate, the ad hoc staff members moved ahead of the security personnel and the materials. That was the mistake they made; they were trying to go and settle in before other colleagues who were to go with the security team from the INEC office."

"Unfortunately, the hoodlums took advantage of that, but we have taken steps to ensure that such a situation doesn't occur again."

Enugu State

There was reported shooting at Ummokpa, headquarters of the Uo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu as thugs attacked the INEC office.

The hoodlums were said to have engaged security agents in a fierce battle as they attempted to hijack election result sheets in all the polling units in the council area.

Osun State

Political thugs attacked some parts of Osun State on Saturday.

Eyewitnesses said some of the hoodlums, who got to Idi-Ogunm polling unit in the Boripe Local Government Area around 3:40pm when the sorting and counting of votes were ongoing, shot into the air to scare the electorate as officials of INEC narrowly escaped death.

Another eyewitness revealed that the attackers sent the entire community into panic as the atmosphere was filled with gunshots before they eventually took away the ballot boxes.

Four persons were later arrested by the police at Idi-Ogunm village.

An eyewitness, who preferred not to be named, said the hoodlums came to the polling unit on motorcycles and Siennas.

Ad hoc staff members of INEC and others at the unit were said to have fled as the hoodlums carted away electoral materials.

The attackers were however repelled by a team of policemen while they were moving to another unit to disrupt the poll.

Police operatives, who engaged the hoodlums in a gun battle, finally succeeded in arresting four of the attackers.

The spokesperson for the state police command, Yemisi Opalola, confirmed the arrest of four suspects, saying, "Operatives arrived at the scene and engaged the hoodlums in an exchange of gunfire. Four of them were arrested."

Earlier, two suspected fake

operatives of the Department of State Service were nabbed in Ila Orangun.

Although voting went on smoothly in many polling units visited in Osofbo, Ila, Iragbiji, Ikurru, Inisa, Ede, Iwo and Ife-Ife, the exercise witnessed pockets of disruptions in Atakumosa East and West local government areas.

Ogun State

Gunmen on Saturday invaded a polling unit in Ayeegbami, Ikemba Local Government Area of Ogun State, and destroyed a ballot box and disrupted the electoral process in the area.

Ayeegbami is a street in Iperu, the hometown of the state governor, Dapo Abiodun.

An eyewitness said the thugs, who rode on motorcycles, invaded the polling unit around 3:40pm, snatched the ballot box and destroyed it.

One of our correspondents, who was monitoring the voting process at Abiodun's polling unit 002 at Ward 3, Ita Osanyin, Iperu, rushed to the scene of the attack to observe the area.

On getting to the polling unit in Ayeegbami, it was desolate and ballot papers littered the street.

The broken ballot box was also sighted on the road.

Contacted, the state Police Public Relations Officer, Abimbola Oyejemi, said he would find out about the attack and get back. He had yet to do so as of the time of filing this report.

EFCC teams attacked

Operatives from the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, who were on duty monitoring the elections, were attacked by political thugs near the chief's palace in the Bwari Area Council of the FCT.

The attack followed the arrest of a man for allegedly masterminding a vote-buying procedure at the polling unit situated at THE Science Primary School, Bwari.

The spokesman for the EFCC, Wilson Uwujaren, disclosed this in a statement made available to journalists.

Uwujaren noted that the team arrested the suspect said to be about 30 years old and retrieved from him a list of beneficiaries he had already paid through an online banking app.

He added, "It was at the point of moving the suspect away from the polling unit that the thugs attacked, smashing the windshield of the commission's patrol van."

"They only retreated into their hideouts after the commission's operatives responded by releasing warning shots, before members of the Joint Task Force team comprising the Department of State Services, the Nigeria Police Force and others arrived on the scene. The incident was immediately reported at the Bwari Police Station."

"Similarly, a team of EFCC operatives on election monitoring duty at Unit 001, Mann Primary School behind Chorobim junction was shot at by unknown persons in two black Prado SUVs and one white Hilux outside the polling unit; they were suspected to be buying votes."

"The EFCC team responded, forcing them to flee the scene. The incident was formally reported to DCP Operations, Haruna Femi, at the Imo State Police Command."

Katsina State

Fifteen men were arrested on Friday by the police in Katsina State over suspicion of plans to interfere with the results of the elections.

The spokesman for the state police command, SP Gambo Isah, confirmed the arrest on Friday night.

He explained that the men were arrested with an unspecified number of laptops with apps alleged to belong to a political party.

He said, "We arrested 15 suspects with an unspecified number of laptops and apps belonging to a political party."

"We have commenced an investigation and we don't want to jump the gun. We have already invited experts to investigate the items as we don't want to jump the gun. We shall make public the outcome of the investigation."