

## news

## 27 killed during gov poll – Report

Solomon Odeniyi with agency report

**N**O fewer than 27 persons were killed during the March 18 governorship and House of Assembly elections across the country, a report by a leading intelligence organisation, SB Morgen stated on Monday.

The deaths were recorded in 10 states out of the 28 where governorship elections were conducted, according to the report.

The report said at least six persons were killed on election day in Rivers and Benue states; while five died in Delta, three in Lagos, two in Akwa-Ibom, and one each in Cross River, Ebonyi, Niger, Kebbi and Katsina states.

The organisation said the casualty figure might be more as it was still working to confirm more incidents.

The report read partly, "The March 18 governorship and Houses of Assembly elections, held three weeks after the presidential and National Assembly elections, were characterised by poor turnout but many had hoped that the 2023 elections would be better, given the initial widespread enthusiasm.

"Our research shows that logistical issues and violence resurfaced and Nigeria's elections risk normalising ethnic-based voter suppression.

"Thugs hijacked and burnt election materials in Ogbia, Bayelsa, making the Independent National Electoral Commission officials flee to Yenagoa for safety. 'Iceland' members were accused of threatening non-PDP voters in Rivers, while some thugs forcefully demanded access to election materials in Akwa Ibom.

"The most striking examples of violence are from Lagos and other states where a long-standing ruling party wants to stay in power forcefully."

The report also said the flaws in the just-concluded elections "leaves Nigeria in danger of illegitimate leadership, which will erode trust in the electoral process."

Also, the Chief Observer, European Union Observer Mission Nigeria, Barry Andrews, said at a new briefing in Lagos on Monday, that at least 21 people were killed during the polls, which he noted were marked by intimidation, violence and a low turnout.

"Polling on election day was again disrupted by multiple incidences of thuggery, intimidation of voters, polling officials, observers and journalists and this occurred in most of the states

"It's actually tragic that 21 people, according to our latest information, lost their lives in election-related violence," Reuters quoted the observer to have said.

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