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## Presidential electrocution

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BY IKENNA EMEWU, BACK FROM SEOUL ON SEPTEMBER 10, 2014

ABUJA METRO, SPECIALS

Day 10 pro-Jonathan campaigners suffered electric shock

**The rave now is the emergence of groups rooting for President Goodluck Jonathan to contest the presidential election in 2015.**

Everyday, one more group joins the pool, and it was therefore, not out of place for one of such groups to take to the streets two weeks ago.

Already, Abuja is witnessing a deluge of billboards, notices, campaign jingles and signposts asking Jonathan to contest. While the groups are generally perceived as smiling home with goodies for aligning with the source of the crumbs flowing, one of them got the other end of the reward two weeks ago.

It was the last Friday in August that, on the 29th precisely when the Centre for International Integrity, Peace and Development in Nigeria rolled out the drums to commence the sensitisation of Nigerians to join in persuading Jonathan to contest next year. Their campaign slogan is *Go-Goodluck Jonathan-Go*.

One of the spots they chose to plant their campaign billboards is the NICON Junction, opposite the Gishiri Village, near the Ministers Hills on the Nnamdi Azikiwe Expressway, Maitama.

But as they were set to lift the board and erect it at the spot, disaster struck. In a flash, the incidence left a very bitter taste in their mouths. While one of the campaigners died instantly, his colleagues landed in the hospitalized. All but one of them who is also the leader of the group have been discharged from the hospital. Chief Stephen Ime is now confined to the wheelchair at the National Hospital, Abuja.

Abuja Metro visited the victim who spoke and narrated what happened.

Ime said on that fateful day, they had gathered at the spot where they wanted to erect the billboard. He

said that when they raised it, it was so tall that they didn't know it had touched the electromagnetic field of

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the high tension power cable. Although the board framed with metal pan did not touch the power line, it was so close that the cables transferred high voltage current through to pole to the hands holding it.

The impact threw all the ten off the billboard and threw the billboard off as well. Needless to add that they all got injured. One of them, Smally Samuel from Akwanga, Nasarawa State, about 34 years old, was not lucky enough to be alive to tell the story. He died on the spot, and his body was later deposited at the Wuse General Hospital morgue.

Up till this time, the body has not been buried because according to Ime, members of Samuel's family are making demands as to who pick the bills for the burial, and he said the group has no money to handle that now as it had been battling to pick the hospital bills of the survivors.

"We have at least N600,000 in bills for the people that survived and hospitalized. Most of them have been discharged with the exception of myself who the doctors say has spinal cord injury and might take longer to heal or be flown abroad for better care, or if nothing adequate is done, I might be permanently confined to the wheelchair all my life. So, you can see me in wheelchair, but I know I will be fine. But even if I don't, I won't relent in my fight for the enthronement of Jonathan or in the fight for a peaceful Nigeria, a task we have been handling for years," he vowed.

### Disappointed

Although Ime is happy that most of his members survived the electrocution, he is bitter that he Federal Government and its agencies have not been helpful in making them overcome the pains. "Of all the government agencies and officials I called to inform about the misfortune that befell us, only the Inspector

General of Police, Suleiman Abba responded and sent someone to see us with financial assistance. We are really grateful to him for the gesture. But I am disappointed that after trying the lines of Dr. Rueben Abati,

Media adviser to the president, he has not picked his call to know why I am calling.

"The Minister of Information, Mr. Labaran Maku picked, promised some assistance, but my wife has been literally spending days and nights at his office to reach him all without success. I also wrote the Director General of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) who also has not deemed it proper to respond. I wrote and dispatched all the letters on September 3, and till now I am talking to you, no assistance. This really discourages and makes those genuinely fighting for a better society to grow cold in their effort.

Can you imagine that I even called Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the former president and he told me that he is no longer in power and can't do anything for me. I have done as much as calling the lines of President Jonathan I have and none of them has been through. So, I am still surprised that those of us that canvass for a better society by ensuring that someone that has been doing well should continue in office would be left unattended in such calamity that befell us. It doesn't speak good of our attitude to nation building."

### Other victims

While still speaking to Ime, a woman walked into the small corner of the hospital corridor where Ime had his little boy sleeping by his side. He was there with his wife that dutifully provided some documents and supplied some missing links in the husband's story.

The woman is a member of the body and a survivor of the electrocution. Her name is Mrs. Angel Moma. She is still nursing a deep cut on her left foot, with slight swelling round the cut. She said the injury was worse and in fact, she was brought to the hospital with both hands shriveled and abnormally folded like palsied. But with time, the hands have become ok. She complained of other injuries at some parts of the body her clothing covered and said she is one of the survivors that were discharged after some days in hospital. Momah is grateful for being alive, but also troubled that they have not got the right responses after the presidential electric shock that would possibly have ended the lives of all 10 campaigners.

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