



Violence mars election in Kogi

— 12th August 2018

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Emmanuel Adeyemi, Lokoja

The bye-election for the Lokoja/Koto Federal Constituency, Kogi State, held yesterday was marred by violence and vote buying as the All Progressives Congress (APC) led government in the state was accused of doing everything possible to win the election.

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At the NEPA voting centre in Lokoja metropolis, one suspected thug loyal to the APC, who was said to have carted away the ballot box and was hotly pursued by some youths, was said to have fallen down. In the process, his pistol that was in firing mode then discharged a bullet, which killed him on the spot. Also, a ballot snatcher loyal to the APC was said to have been stoned to death at the Maigari palace voting centre while the three others were killed separately within Lokoja metropolis. In Paparanda and Karaworo polling units in Lokoja metropolis, there were reports of intimidation and harassment of voters by government agents and political appointees. Thugs were said to have beaten a Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) stalwart, Mohammed Balga.

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In Ward B, some people who dressed in police uniform with red beret were said to have besieged two polling units, shot sporadically and carted away the voting materials.

At the Osuku Primary School polling unit in Kotokarfi Local Government Area, thugs fired sporadic gunshots to scare away opposition party supporters, preventing them from coming out to vote.

As at 11.30 a.m. when reporters visited the place, there was no single person allowed to vote as those who came out were only accredited but only APC supporters were allowed to vote. The presiding officer, Joseph Julius, told reporters that they were arm-twisted to follow the bidding of the APC and they had to play along to save their lives. It was learnt that the local government administrator, Mohammed Tanko, is from the ward.

Meanwhile, a one time Secretary to the State Government, Alhaji Musa Ahmadu, decried the involvement of government officials and security agents in carrying and displaying arms in the Lokoja/Koto Federal Constituency bye-election.

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The former scribe while speaking to journalists accused the state governor, his chief of staff and other government functionaries of openly carrying arms against the tenets of the electoral law

Alhaji Musa called on President Mohammadu Buhari to call the security agencies to order, stressing that their action and conduct of the governor may make the integrity of the Lokoja/Kogi federal constituency poll a nullity.

At the Lokoja Ward D, where one of the contestants and immediate past Speaker of the State Assembly, Umar Imam voted, he alleged that the government marred the election with the use of thugs and security personnel who and arrested members of the opposition.

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Umar alleged that his younger brother was taken to the Government House with his agents, where they were beaten and tortured.

