

Rivers: Killing, shootings, hijack of ballot boxes mar polls

• Scores feared dead in Abonnema, Andoni ... Wike expresses delight with turnout

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Tony John, Port Harcourt

Yesterday's presidential and National Assembly elections were marred by violence, hijacking of ballot boxes and late arrival of electoral materials in some parts of Rivers State.

Over 10 persons were reportedly shot dead in Abonnema, in Akuku Toru Local Government Area. A chieftain of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Mowan Etete, his elder brother and one of his cousins were shot in Asarama community in Andoni Local Government Area of the state.

Also, an ex-official of APC State Executive Committee, simply identified as Ignatius, was also shot death in Ajakaja in Andoni LGA.

The incident in Abonnema, which was described as a war zone, occurred when military men allegedly attempted to hijack the voting materials, but members of the community resisted them. The development snowballed into gun duel between the hoodlums, who were in possession of high calibre weapons, and the security operatives. The

military reportedly reinforced and the shooting got out of hand, leaving several people dead while others scampered for safety.

In Bonny LGA, there was heavy shooting and ballot box snatching, thereby scuttling voting in the riverine area of the state.

Sunday Sun gathered that a disagreement erupted between agents of the different political parties before gunshots boomed.

A senior official of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), who stated that he was not privileged to speak on the matter, said the incident truncated voting process in the LGA.

Some electorate got wounded in the pandemonium, while the INEC ad hoc staff also left the scene for safety, as shooting increased.

Similarly, there was sporadic shootings in Ubima community, the hometown of two former governors of Rivers State, Celestine Omechia and Chibuike Amaechi.

Sunday Sun gathered that the incident occurred shortly after the Minister of Transportation, Amaechi, cast his vote. The shootings were reported in Units three, six, seven and 11 in Ubima, thereby chasing voters away.

In Okrika LGA, Sunday Sun gathered that electoral materials arrived the council headquarters about 3am yesterday, but materials meant for Wards six, seven, eight nine and 10 were snatched by political thugs.

Meanwhile, the state Governor, Nyesom Wike, has expressed happiness with the large turnout of voters during polls, stating that Nigerians were ready to exercise their franchise.

Wike, who was accompanied by his wife, Eberechi, cast his vote at Ward 9, Unit 7 in Obio/Akpor LGA. The governor arrived the polling unit at 11.50a.m and proceeded for accreditation and voting. His his wife also voted at the same polling unit.

He said: “From what I have seen here, it is a large turnout and Nigerians are ready to express their franchise. Apart from the military intervention, things are moving on smoothly.”

