

Rivers: 5 feared dead in post election violence

• Tinubu orders security beef-up, PDP gobs speak



L-R (Front row): Seyi Makinde (Oyo State), Senator Bala Mohammed (Bauchi), Ahmadu Fintiri (Adamawa), Senator Douye Diri (Bayelsa), Sheriff Oborevwori (Delta), Back row: AbdulRahman AbdulRasqa (Kwara), Pastor Umo Eno (Akwa Ibom) and Siminalayi Fubara (Rivers) during the governors' condolence visit to yesterday.

From Juliana Taiwo-Obalonye, Abuja, TONY JOHN, Port Harcourt and Seyi Babalola

ABOUT five persons have reportedly lost their lives following the post local government council election violence that erupted in Rivers State, yesterday.

The Action People's Party (APP) won 22 local government areas while the Action Alliance won one. Governor Sim Fubara and FCT Minister, Nyesom Wike, have been at loggerheads over the political soul of the state.

① Daily Sun gathered that three youths were shot dead in Oyigbo Local Government Area, one in Ahoada East and another in Bori, the traditional headquarters of Ogoni people in Khana LGA.

Multiple sources claimed that many of the casualties were youths allegedly loyal to Governor Siminalayi Fubara.

The deaths in Oyigbo LGA were seen in a viral video where somebody was heard saying in pidgin English, 'Oyigbo, get as e bi'.

It was not immediately clear if the Bori incident is linked to the protest that rocked some LGs over the order of the police to unseal the secretariats of the 23 LGs which have been under lock and key in the last three months.

A source claimed that gunshots were heard near Bori and people started running in different directions.

"It was near Bori but I can't say exactly where. A young man was shot and people started running. The man was rushed to the hospital this morning."

The casualties were recorded a few hours after Police withdrew from council secretariats.

There has not been any official statement from relevant authorities concerning the reported deaths and other skirmishes that occurred in some LGAs.

Few hours after the Police unsealed the 23 local government Secretariat and ordered its personnel to vacate the areas with immediate effect, hoodlums set ablaze the headquarters of Eleme, Ikwerre and Emohua local government areas.

According to eyewitnesses, the attackers targeted specific buildings within the complex.

Meanwhile, President Bola Tinubu has called on Governor Fubara, political leaders and their supporters in Rivers to exercise restraint and uphold the rule of law.

The president, who expressed deep concern over reports of arson and explosions in the state, urged all political actors to de-escalate the situation and discourage their supporters from engaging in violence or destructive actions. Mr. Bayo Olanuga, Special Adviser to the President, Information and Strategy, said in a statement.

He directed the police to restore and maintain peace, law and order immediately.

While instructing law enforce-

ment agencies to bring the situation under control, he emphasised the need to ensure the security of public institutions.

Tinubu said government facilities built with public funds must be safeguarded from vandalism.

He stressed that self-help has no place in a democratic system, especially after 25 years of continuous democracy.

According to Tinubu, the judiciary can settle all political disputes, and the outcome of the election should be no exception.

• PDP gobs reaffirm support for Rivers govt

The Chairman of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Governors' Forum (PDPGF), Senator Bala Mohammed, said Governor Fubara has proven himself a true democrat, who, against all odds, has pushed through with decisions and actions to deepen democracy.

Governor Mohammed said Fubara has done so by being proactive with an open mind, deploying his democratic instincts with strategies to carefully deliver democratic governance at the local government level, irrespective of party allegiance or consideration.

Senator Mohammed, who is also the Governor of Bauchi State, made the remark shortly after he witnessed the swearing-in of 23 democratically elected Rivers State Local Government Council Chairmen at the Executive Chambers of Government House in Port

Harcourt on Sunday evening.

The PDP Governors' Forum chairman affirmed that Rivers State is a PDP State, even if the just sworn-in local government chairmen and councillors are of different political parties.

Governor Mohammed be-moaned the situation, describing it as the problem that they have found themselves both as a party and as governors.

However, Senator Mohammed said Governor Fubara, who is the vice chairman of the PDP Governors' Forum, is still a member of the PDP despite the fact that other parties constitute the body of elected officers at the local government level.

Governor Mohammed said it was inadvisable to ignore a sitting governor at the sub-national level because of the role he plays and the following he commands.

Responding to how soon the PDP will resolve its festering crisis and achieve desired unity, Governor Mohammed assured that it may seem prolonged, but quickly added that true reconciliation was in view.

Governor Mohammed emphasised: "And that is the more reason I am here. Governor Siminalayi Fubara is the Vice Chairman of the PDP Governors' Forum. All the governors are with him, and certainly, we are taking steps to ensure reconciliation."

"Reconciliation with somebody who they had started with; the former Governor of this State and

the Minister of Federal Capital Territory (FCT) is a must because, certainly, they have come a long way. We didn't want to throw the baby away with the bad water."

"And certainly, the governors are with the Governor (Fubara) because this is our own tradition and fraternity; at the same time, out of our own political history as a party that has a history of governance."

"We are still stretching our arms of reconciliation to his mentor, to his friend and brother, and also our colleague," he added.

• INC tasks Tinubu

The Ijaw National Congress (INC) Worldwide, has urged President Tinubu to pay close attention to political developments in Rivers to avert breakdown of law and order.

Prof. Benjamin Okaba, President INC, in a statement in Abuja, said the political tension in the state was capable breaching public peace and threaten democracy in the state.

"Rivers is of special interest to the INC as lots of Ijaw people are indigenes of the state."

"The INC believes that the issues we are dealing with in Rivers are far beyond political godfatherism, but that of desperation for state capture by all means and at all cost."

"The extent to which some of the dramatis personae are going with their self-seeking adventurous activities is quite worrisome as it appears that they do not care if democracy is truncated in Nigeria."

"Local Government elections are not new in Nigeria. Indeed, it is a constitutional requirement that falls within the legislative purview of the states," he said.

He said three states in Nigeria, Akwa-Ibom, Benue and Jigawa conducted local government elections at the same time as Rivers with less rancour.

"It bears questioning why the elections in Rivers attracted such desperation and attention to the extent that the courts and the Nigerian Police became over-interested participants in the drama," the INC President said.

Okaba added that INC could not comprehend how a Federal High Court would restrain the Police from performing her constitutional responsibilities.

• Warn Wike, Bode George charges Tinubu

Chief Bode George, PDP chieftain, has advised President Tinubu to warn the FCT minister, Wike, to allow Governor Fubara to work.

George claimed Tinubu would be the biggest loser if he failed to warn Wike.

It should be recalled that Fubara held the local government election in Rivers State without the presence of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF).

Under Fubara, the Action People's Party (APP) won 22 local government areas, with the Action Alliance taking the last seat.

Before the election, Wike and Fubara clashed over control of the state's political system.

However, George warned Tinubu not to allow democracy to be stifled under his leadership.

In a statement he issued, the PDP chieftain said: "Now that people of Rivers State have boldly asserted their civic and constitu-

tional rights by coming out to vote in the local government election on Saturday, this is the time for the former governor of the state and now FCT Minister, Nyesom Wike, to allow Governor Siminalayi Fubara work and deliver the dividend of democracy to the people."

"This is also the time for President Bola Tinubu to advise Wike, who is one of his ministers, to allow the governor to work."

"I say this with all sense of responsibility because if this democracy is truncated, God forbid, Tinubu, as the Commander-in-Chief, will be the biggest loser."

• Clark speaks

Elder Statesman Edwin Clark has commended both President Bola Tinubu and Governor Siminalayi Fubara for the peaceful conduct of Rivers State's local government elections on October 5, 2024.

In a statement he personally signed, he praised the high voter turnout and the absence of police involvement, marking a significant shift in the electoral process.

Clark highlighted that the election was free from violence and interference, contrasting it with the recent Edo State governorship election that required extensive police deployment.

He urged the Federal Government and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to investigate ways to reduce electoral costs. The Action Peoples Party (APP) emerged victorious, winning 22 out of 23 chairmanship positions, a historic first for an opposition party in Rivers since 1999.

Justice Adolphus Enebeli, chairman of the Rivers State Independent Electoral Commission, confirmed the results, noting the election's transparency and citizen engagement despite adverse weather conditions. Clark congratulated the newly elected officials and called for unity among Rivers citizens to foster peace and development. He emphasised the need to move past political crises and work towards a brighter future for the state.

His statement read: I join millions of Nigerians and the good people of Rivers State to thank God for the very successful, transparent, and peaceful local government elections that took place in Rivers State on Saturday, 5th October 2024. I am particularly glad that the citizens of the state turned out in large numbers to exercise their right to vote.

"This achievement, despite the deliberate boycott of the police from participating in the elections, demonstrates that the people of Rivers State, and indeed, Nigerians as a whole, are mature and patriotic enough to conduct elections and manage their affairs without interference from the police."

"This is a significant and commendable development because there has never been any election, be it presidential, state, or local government, where the security agencies, particularly the police, were not involved, with significant amounts of public funds expended."

"The fact that a statewide Local Government election can be conducted in a free, fair, and credible manner without the loss of lives and destruction of property is a remarkable experience."

Don't give our salary to LGs, unions tell FG

• Cont'd Page 1

allocated to the LGs, saying the councils should determine how to maintain and utilise their funds.

Following the judgment, the federal government expressed its commitment to its implementation. It set up a 10-man committee under the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Senator George Akume, to work out the modalities for enforcing the judgment.

The committee also set up a sub-committee headed by the Minister of Budget and Economic Planning, Senator Abubakar Bagudu, to work with stakeholders on the technical details of the enforcement.

However, despite the general

sentiments in favour of the apex court judgment, there are concerns about the capacity of the local councils to discharge the responsibilities bestowed on them efficiently.

The unions amplified this fear in their memorandum last week, urging the federal government to pay their salary, training and pension funds to the Local Government Service Commission.

"Gross Salary of Local Government Workers should be domiciled with the Local Government Service Commission," they said, adding, "2 percent of total LG allocation for Local Government Commission running grants and Local Government Training should be domiciled with the Commission."

They said the gross salary of primary school teachers and 1.5 percent of the total LGA allocation for running the State Universal Basic Education Board should be domiciled with the Board.

The unions also requested that 25 percent of the gross salary of teachers and local government workers be deducted from the LG allocation to pay pension and gratuity and be domiciled with the Local Government Staff Pension Board.

Finally, the workers' unions urged the federal government to pay the 5 percent statutory grant for traditional rulers to the traditional councils' account. To secure their preferred fiscal allocation model, the unions urged the federal government to restruc-

ture all the supervisory institutions controlling and supervising local government workers by expanding their governing board to include the workers' and council chairman's representatives. The institutions include NULGE, SUBEB, Local Government Staff Pension Board, and Primary Health Care Agency.

The JAC pushed for a renewed drive for transparent and prudent management of resources at the council level. "We recommend the enforcement of procurement policy in all local governments; enforcement of NFIU guidelines; creation of Audit Department; and appointment of the Auditor-General for the LG from chartered accountants in the LG," it said.