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### Obi, Ngige Bicker over Alleged Killing of Two Protesters

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Senator Chris Ngige

#### •*INEC meets today on supplementary election*

By Chuks Okocha and Charles Onyekamuo

Anambra State Governor, Mr. Peter Obi and the All Progressives Congress (APC) candidate in last Saturday's governorship election in the state, Senator Chris Ngige, yesterday squabbled over the alleged killing of two female protesters in Awka.

Ngige's spokesman, Mr. Okelo Madukaife, had in a statement claimed that the two women met their death when policemen shot into a crowd of women protesting the conduct of the election.

However, Obi's Senior Special Assistant, Media and Publicity, Mr. Valentine Obienyem, disputed the claim, saying it was a figment of Ngige's imagination.

Also, the crisis of confidence between the state chapter of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the party's governorship candidate, Mr. Tony Nwoye,

over the election remained unresolved following their different positions on the outcome of the poll.

According to the Ngige camp, the two women, identified as Anne Ifesi and Hannah Njiko, were feared dead when a contingent of policemen tried to disperse the protesters who were marching on the headquarters of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Awka, to demand the cancellation of the governorship election.

In addition, it said 19 others who sustained varying degree of injuries from beatings and the inhalation of teargas were rushed to a private hospital in Awka for treatment.

It added that some 700 women, ranging from ages 25 to 70 and drawn from the 21 local government areas of the state, were on their way to the INEC headquarters when policemen manning various points at the INEC office intercepted them and engaged them in an argument.

“The situation degenerated when one of the riot policemen shot live ammunition twice on the ground burrowing the tarred road, before his colleagues acting on a telephone clearance from what one officer later described as order from above, dispersed nine teargas canisters into the crowd, in quick succession.

“This led to a stampede that left five women unconscious and 19 injured. But undeterred, the women regrouped at the Arroma Junction, where they were intercepted by men of the State Security Service (SSS) who tried to seize their placards, but the women engaged them in a physical combat, recovering all the placards

“Some of the placards read: ‘Jonathan, leave Anambra Alone’, ‘Free and fair election is a must!’, ‘Jega is worse than Iwu’, ‘Sack Onukogu Now’ and ‘No fresh election, No governor,’” the statement from Ngige’s aide added.

It explained that of the five unconscious women who were rushed to the private hospital, three regained consciousness while the two others were feared dead.

But Obi disputed the claim, saying it was concocted by the Ngige camp to draw sympathy from the public following his loss in the governorship election.

Obienyem, in a statement yesterday, said: “Journalists in Awka brought to my attention the news being circulated by Dr. Chris Ngige's Media Assistant, Mr. Okelo Madukaife, alleging that two protesting women were shot at Awka.

“I was later informed that Dr. Chris Ngige personally sent text messages to them as he did when the Uke tragedy occurred begging them to use the story.

“The story is completely fabricated and the names mentioned are non-existent, otherwise let them mention the name of the hospital.

“How can a former governor, illegal though, and now a serving senator, be an embodiment of fraud? He is desperately trying to convince people that if the election is not cancelled, there will be violence.”

The election has also caused a disagreement in the camp of the PDP as the state leadership of the party and Nwoye maintained different positions yesterday on its outcome.

The state party Chairman, Mr. Ken Emeakayi, at a press conference in Awka, while commending party members and the people of Anambra State for their peaceful and orderly conduct during the election also thanked President Goodluck Jonathan for providing adequate security and the enabling environment that made the “hitch-free election” possible.

He also condemned the attempt by the APC to discredit the governorship election.

He expressed the readiness of the PDP to participate in the supplementary election whenever INEC is ready for it.

Emeakayi said the state PDP was aligning itself with the stand of the national leadership of the party on the election and its outcome while asking INEC to complete the election and announce the winner.

He feigned ignorance that Nwoye had distanced himself from the supplementary election because of its shoddy conduct.

“I am not aware that the candidate of the party has disagreed with the outcome of the election and distanced himself from the supplementary election when INEC fixes it.

“I am not aware he said so. I am not the party. The party is the NWC and it has said we will participate in the supplementary election. The state working committee of the party met today (yesterday) towards ensuring that we participate. The candidate is not the party,” he said.

But the campaign organisation of Nwoye, faulted the party's chairman, saying it was wrong for the party not to see anything wrong with an election that was declared inconclusive, and adjudged to be marred by malpractices and irregularities.

The Director General of the campaign organisation, Mr. Osita Ezenwa, at a press conference in Awka yesterday, said their candidate had earlier pointed out that the election was flawed and should be cancelled.

“The election has been poorly conducted and what remains to be done is to cancel it and conduct a fresh election. If PDP loses from the fresh process, we will congratulate the winner; no problem, but to foist the result of a gravely flawed election on us is unacceptable,” he said.

He flayed some party officials, especially PDP National Publicity Secretary, Mr. Olisa Metuh, for congratulating APGA in an inconclusive election when a winner was yet to emerge and wondered why he was in a hurry to do so.

“Nwoye’s name was not in the register of voters for the election. He was our candidate in the election. We call for the total cancellation of the election. Prof

Jega is a forthright person and we hope he will do what is right,” he said.

According to him, since Nwoye is the party’s candidate in the election, it will be wrong to shave his head behind his back by making pronouncements on whether he will participate in the supplementary election without consulting him.

“Before somebody makes that kind of a pronouncement, you need to consult the candidate and no consultation took place. So they are on their own. The only person who has the power to determine what step to take is the candidate.

“The election is still on ongoing and until the chief returning officer declares the results, the INEC can still cancel the election because it is a sham. It was marred by irregularities and malpractices across board.

“We don’t agree with the INEC when it said it lacked the power to cancel the election and start a fresh one,” he added.

INEC is expected to hold today, what a top official of the commission described as an “operational audit” of the report submitted by electoral officials that conducted the election.

Chief Press Secretary to the INEC Chairman, Mr. Kayode Idowu, confirmed that the meeting would hold today to study the report submitted by the electoral officials.

However, as the nation awaits the outcome of the meeting where INEC would consider a day for the supplementary election, a former governorship aspirant, Chief Mike Okoye, has called on the leadership of the National Assembly to intervene to stop the growing tension in the state.

He also called on INEC Chairman, Prof. Attahiru Jega, to consider holding a fresh election in the state to douse tension.

He said INEC had committed a technical mistake having proceeded to officially declare the collated results of the local government and constituencies without seeking proper legal advice.

In a statement in Abuja, the constitutional lawyer said the commission in his view rightly exercised the powers conferred on it by virtue of Section 53(2) of the Electoral Act.

“The commission in my view ought not to have declared as final the collated results of the local government areas and constituencies before it ordered another election in the affected polling units.

“Since the commission, wrongly, in my view, proceeded to officially declare the collated results of all the affected local government areas and constituencies, it is without power to alter the final figures of the results declared for any reason whatsoever.

“Only a court of law can alter or amend the figures of the final result officially declared by the commission,” he said.

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