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Violence mars Lagos APC campaig



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By Temitope Ogunbanke, Muritala Ayinla and Taiwo Jimoh 

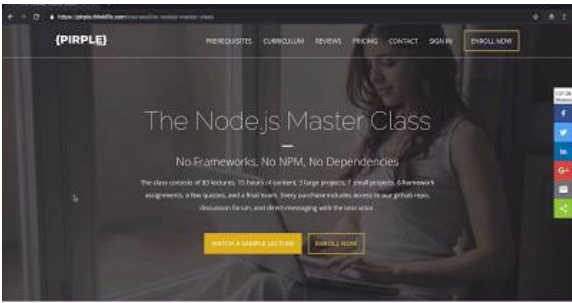


...three killed, journalists, others injured

- **Police deny killings, say 15 arrested**

The flag-off of the governorship campaign of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Lagos State for 2019 general elections, yesterday, turned bloody as hoodlums disrupted the rally at the Sky Power Ground, Oba Akinjobi Road, in Ikeja.

The hoodlums, who brandished all sorts of dangerous weapons, fired gunshots during the flag-off for-all fight and in the ensuing melee, three people were feared dead, while scores of journalists, party faithful, government officials and others sustained varying degrees of injuries.



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Trouble started from the music stand of popular musician, King Wasiu Ayinde Marshage, 1) few minutes into Governor Akinwumi Ambode's speech as a member of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW), who was close to the music stand fired a gunshot which was immediately followed by multiple gunshots from some party supporters and the

New Telegraph learnt that a member of the NURTW loyal to a chieftain of the union, Kunle Poly, pushed one of the union's executives, Musiliu Akinsanya, also known as MC Olu, from the stage as a result of disagreement in the union.

The disagreement escalated and led to several gunshots, when loyalists of Kunle Poly descended on Akinsanya and injured him in the process. Akinsanya was immediately taken out of the campaign ground by his boys, who invaded the music stand in their number to rescue him.

They later launched a reprisal on the Kunle Poly's faction during which members of the two factions freely used guns, cutlasses and charms on themselves as well as party supporters and others at the rally.

Among those who got injured during the mayhem that lasted for almost 30 minutes, three journalists – the Group Political Editor of The Nation Newspapers, Emmanuel Okeke, Senior Political Correspondent of New Telegraph Newspapers, Temitope Ogunbanke and Abiodun Yusuf of Ibile Television.

The journalists, who were covering the event, sustained varied degrees of injuries from being fired by the hoodlums.

The performing musician, KWAM1, who escaped from being attacked by the hoodlums, was led out of the venue by his boys and he trekked from Oba Akinjobi to Isaac John in Gbagbe, boarding a vehicle that took him away from the venue.

However, some chieftains of the APC were not lucky as they were beaten and harassed during the incident.

New Telegraph gathered that the clash between the NURTW factions was as a result of a tussle among leaders of the union and the fallout of last year's APC primaries.

It was also gathered that MC Olumo and Kunle Poly, who are chieftains of NURTW in Lagos, are working for different factions of Lagos APC.

Besides the clash between the NURTW factions, the campaign was also turned to a bad ground by some loyalists of APC chieftains, who are still feeling aggrieved over the outcome of the party's primaries.

Some of the candidates who won the primaries were alleged to have been substituted by other leaders of the party.

Reacting to the incident, the Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO) of the Lagos State Police Command, Chike Oti, however, denied that anybody was killed at the venue of the rally. He said 15 suspected hoodlums have been arrested and insisted that the campaign was "successful and it ended with a closing prayer."

Oti said: "The programme was on, when some misguided youths attempted to disrupt the event, but our men swiftly moved in and curtailed them and the programme continued."

Confirming the number of injured, an officer of the Lagos State Ambulance Services (LASAMBUS), said eight persons were stabbed and were treated by officials of the agency. "Many could have sustained injuries and left the scene, but those we attended to were eight as we speak," he said.

Despite the clash, Governor Ambode, who was heavily protected by policemen and police security personnel alongside with other party chieftains on the campaign stage, continued with his speech, while accusing “the other party” of being responsible for the commotion.

The governor, who handed over the party’s flag to the APC governorship candidate in the state, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu and other candidates, appealed to Lagosians to vote for the party in the February 16 and March 2 elections to ensure continuity of good governance in the state.

His words: “We believe strongly that we will all join hands together to make him (Sanwo-Olu) governor of Lagos State. What we are doing today is a united campaign in Lagos and we are going to do it together.

“In the last 20 years, we have witnessed progressive growth in Lagos State. We need to know why, and the reason is that we have leaders, who have delivered on their promises,” he said. Sanwo-Olu gave a vote of thanks, but by this time, the campaign ground was almost deserted.

Meanwhile, 63 political parties in the state endorsed Sanwo-Olu and his running mate, Obafemi Hamzat as their candidates for March 2 governorship election.

Chairmen of the parties, who were present at the rally promised to work for APC’s victory in the gubernatorial election.

Speaking on behalf of his colleagues, Chairman of Accord Party in Lagos State, Otunkunso Fatukasi said: “We are solidly supporting Sanwo-Olu and Hamzat. We, the 63 political parties will work in the 57 councils in Lagos to ensure that Sanwo-Olu becomes governor of Lagos State.”

National Leader of African Democratic Congress (ADC), Colonel Folorunsho Ibrahim, also came to the APC with about 15,000 of the party’s members across Nigeria at the event.



A former deputy chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the state, Chief Oluwole Apina also dumped his party for the APC.

