

Seven Feared Killed, Houses Destroyed as Fresh Violence Erupts in Jos

October 1, 2018 6:03 am



- ***APC, PDP hold primary elections amidst violence***

- ***Unknown gunmen kill eight in Benue***

By Seriki Adinoyi in Jos and **George Okoh** in Makurdi

At least seven persons were killed and several houses burnt in a renewed violence which started yesterday in Tina Junction area of Jos, Plateau State.

But in the midst of the violence, the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) continued their party primaries in the other parts of the state capital.

This is coming as unknown gunmen on Saturday invaded Okpoga, the headquarters of Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State, killing eight persons.

The Jos violence began when an Apostolic Church in the area was allegedly attacked during its Sunday service by some youths believed to have come from the Hausa community in Jos.

The native youths soon mobilised for a reprisal leading to full-blown riot that escalated to other parts of the city, including Rikkos, Bauchi Ring Road, Students' Village of the University of Jos, Faringada, Katako, Dilimi and Cele Bridge near Tina Junction in Jos.

Confirming the riot across the city, the Commander of the military Special Task Force (STF), Major General Augustine Agundu, made a live broadcast, on the local Plateau Radio Television Commission (PRTV).

According to him, "Today has been one of those unfortunate moments. We have had a lot of unrests in a cross section of the town. I was with the youths in Jos North LGA yesterday – Laranto in specific, and we had heart-warming discussions and interactions.

"But in a situation like this, certainly, some miscreants and some criminals might want to seize some undue advantage or opportunity to unleash mayhem to innocent citizens and this is what we are condemning since my mandate in this Plateau State is the restoration of peace, law and order and total civility within the society.

"May I appeal to every good citizen of the state living both here in the state and outside the state, to urge the youth, the misguided ones to sheathe their swords and live in peace with one another.

"I am sure that every apparatus of government is working assiduously hard to ensure that normalcy returns and every person goes about his normal duties.

"There is no need for us to lift up arms against one another. Every conflict in this world has a solution and the solution is understanding and perseverance. We should be our brother's keepers and our sister's keepers. There should be peaceful co-existence."

Agundu condemned the attacks urging the political leaders to warn their wards to eschew violence.

On his part, the State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Undie Adie, in a statement he signed said, that "all the people in the affected areas are advised in their own interest to remain indoors. Persons found loitering around will be arrested and dealt with according to the law. All patrol commanders have been given instructions to this effect."

Adie named the places affected as Dutse Uku, Students Village, Bauchi Ring Road, Angwan Rukuba and Bauchi Road.

"Also affected are Tina Junction, TNG Junction. All persons living around these areas are advised to go back to their houses and remain indoors."

Meanwhile, sporadic gunshots have continued in these communities.

Some visitors who were in transit from a wedding ceremony in Gombe, who did not know their road, ran into the riot and three of them were killed. Also, a 200 level Law student of the University of Jos was among those attacked and killed.

Meanwhile, in the midst of the ensuing violence, the APC and PDP continued their party primaries in the other part of the state capital.

APC's governorship endorsement of incumbent Governor Somon Lalong held and the governorship primaries of the PDP in Plateau State also held.

The APC with 3,150 delegates were to endorse Lalong, while the PDP was to choose among the 13 governorship aspirants.

The results of the primaries were still being expected as at press time.

In a related development, unknown Gunmen on Saturday invaded Okpoga, the headquarters of Okpokwu LGA of Benue State, killing eight persons.

The unknown gunmen, numbering about 10, invaded the area and shot sporadically at any one at sight leading to the death of no fewer than eight persons, including Mr. Okoh Simon, an emergency ambulance service provider who lived at the city centre.

According to a source, who spoke to THISDAY, the attack may have emanated from the neighboring Olô community in Edumoga district of the same local government who has been at cold war with the Okpoga people.

According to the residents of the area who spoke to THISDAY at Ugwu-Okpoga in the early hours of yesterday, the two communities have been carrying out attack on each other for the past five years.

"We have been in this cold war with the Edumoga people for the past five years. All efforts by security agents and other government officials to settle the rift have proved otherwise. The Olô people are very stubborn and wicked. They call themselves 'Benue's Niger Delta region,'" Mr. Ogwuche Innocent, an Okpoga resident told THISDAY.

As at the time of filing this report, it was not clear if anyone was arrested.

Bodies of those killed in the attack have been deposited at the Okpoga General Hospital mortuary for further investigation.

Meanwhile the Benue State Police Command have confirmed the killings.

A press statement signed by the command's spokesman, DSP Moses Yamu, said gunshots were heard at a beer parlour around Okpoga roundabout yesterday at about 9 p.m.

"Our men swiftly mobilised to the scene and engaged the hoodlums in a gun duel which forced them to flee but however, six persons, including a police sergeant who was on mufti were killed in the beer parlour before the police arrived the scene".

He said preliminary investigation revealed that the yet to be identified armed men were from Olo community, and were led by one "Mathew".

He said the state Police Commissioner, Ene Okon has ordered the Area Commander to relocate to that area, as teams of Operation Zenda, and Police Mobile Force have been drafted to the area to ensure that the culprits are identified and arrested.

He said investigation had since commenced to unravel the motive behind the attack.
