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No more elections in Rivers until peace returns — INEC

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*Military plotting to declare state of emergency — Wike

*Wike is turning Rivers to another Somalia — APC

*Hold INEC, security agencies responsible —PDP

By Jimitota Onoyume, Kingsley Omonobi, Henry Umoru, Ben Agande & Omeiza Ajayi

PORT HARCOURT— THE Independent National Electoral Commssion, INEC, has said that it will not return to Rivers until the state is conducive to

conduct elections.

The INEC spoke as the heavy shootings that characterised weekend's federal and some state legislative re-run elections in Rivers, yesterday, petered out and became a verbal warfare among stakeholders in the polls as the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, and All Progressives Congress, APC, traded blames over the issue.

We won't return to Rivers until there is peace – INEC

Mr Oluwole Osaze-Uzzi, INEC's Director of Voter Education and Publicity, revealed that INEC had scheduled a meeting for tomorrow to review the situation in Rivers, adding: "I don't want to pre-empt anything ahead of the Wednesday meeting."



VOTERS WAITING TO CAST THEIR VOTE AT
UNIT 6 WARD 5 .DURING THE NATIONAL AND
STATE ASSEMBLIES RERUN ELECTION AT UNIT 5
WARD12 AT PORT HARCOURT CITY
GOVERNMENT AREA IN RIVERS STATE
TODAY19/03/16

Citing widespread irregularities, the commission annulled the election in

eight local government areas and also suspended collation of results after declaring few results.

In an interview in Abuja with The Cable, yesterday, Osaze-Uzzi also said the commission would investigate the allegations levelled against it during the election. He said the decision on when the remaining results of the election would announced would be taken at the meeting.

Military plotting to declare state of emergency — Wike

Apart from attacking the APC, Governor Nyesom Wike accused the military of orchestrating violence in the elections as part of a plot to declare a state of emergency in the state.

The governor, who said no official of the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, has power to cancel results already declared by the electoral umpire, stated that the government had video evidence of the ignoble role of soldiers during the elections.

Wike, in a statement by his media aide, Mr Simeon Nwakaudu, said: “We have videos of the atrocities committed by the military across Rivers State. We shall release them at the appropriate time. There is an attempt to cause violence to declare a state of emergency in Rivers State.”

He said the APC was not prepared for the elections, noting that it concentrated on propaganda instead of relating with the people for the elections.

This came as the Rivers APC called for the arrest of Wike over the alleged assassination attempt on Dr Dakuku Peterside and others and cancellations of the polls. just as the Rivers PDP attributed the cancellation of the election in parts of the state to use of fake electoral materials.

Hold INEC, security agencies responsible – PDP

The national leadership of the PDP said the INEC and security agencies should be held responsible, if there is a break down of law and order in Rivers State as a result of the failure of the commission to declare the results of last Saturday's election.

In a statement, yesterday, National Publicity Secretary of the PDP, Chief Olisa Metuh, said the conduct of polls fell short of the standard expected in view of the preparations put into it.

The position of the party came on the heels of a warning by the National Vice Chairman, South of the party, Dr Cairo Ojuogboh, that attempt by the APC to manipulate the outcome of elections would have dire consequences on the country.

Metuh noted that it was disappointing that since Prof. Mahmood Yakubu's appointment as chairman of the INEC, he had not been able to conduct any conclusive election in few constituencies and states so far and wondered what would be the case when the entire country is involved.

He said: "Also grossly unacceptable is the shoddy work by security operatives leading to escalation of violence, avoidable deaths and eventual cancellation of election results in eight local government areas of the state."

On his part, Ojuogboh called on the APC-led Federal Government to allow Wike run the state government, saying after four years, he will be accountable to the people of Rivers State.

He said: "The entire idea of trying to take over the Rivers State House of

Assembly by force by rigging the elections so that the lawmakers can oppose Wike in governance is a badly thoughtout idea. So we employ the Federal Government and the APC to advise the APC Rivers state to thread cautiously, because peace has no alternative. If you do not prepare for peace, what you prepare for is war.”

Also, the Rivers PDP said it was unfortunate and shameful that despite all efforts and assurances from security agencies and all stakeholders prior to the polls, some APC desperate and agitated political office seekers still went on to connive with certain electoral officers and military personnel to smuggle in fake election materials with a view to rigging the election, leading to the cancellation of election in some parts of the state by the INEC.

In a statement by Jerry Needam, Special Adviser on Media and Publicity to Rivers State PDP Chairman, Felix Obuah, the party blamed the precarious situation on the Minister for Transportation, Rotimi Amaechi, whom he said had threatened to use any means possible to stop the ruling PDP government in the state from winning the election.

Wike turning Rivers to another Somalia – APC

Countering, the Rivers APC expressed outrage over the assassination attempt on the Director-General of the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), Dr. Dakuku Peterside, the State APC Chairman, Dr. Davies Ibiamu Ikanya, and the deputy governorship candidate of the party in the April 2015 elections, Asita O. Asita.

Describing as “outrageous, an affront and condemnable,” the “brazen attempt to snuff out the lives of three key leaders of Rivers APC,” the party in a statement held Governor Wike responsible for the assassination

attempt.

It called on relevant security agencies to quickly arrest and interrogate him and to hasten to bring the full weight of the law on all those involved in the dastardly act.

The party, in the statement by Chief Eze Chukwuemeka Eze, SSA Media and Public Affairs to the state Chairman, APC Rivers State, said: “We have often cried out about Wike’s bloodthirstiness but, unfortunately, nothing was done to keep him in check.

“Before last weekend’s state and National Assembly rerun elections in the state, we had openly cried out following Wike’s open threats on the lives of President Muhammadu Buhari, Chief of Army Staff, Lt.-Gen. Tukur Buratai, and Minister of Transportation, Chibuike Rotimi Amaechi. Those who thought we were shouting wolf where one does not exist now know better.”

The Rivers APC lamented that Wike, in only 10 months in office, is fast turning Rivers State into another Somalia.

The party said: “He is attempting to dwarf other evil and satanic regimes such as those of Mobutu Sese Seko, Emperor Jean Bedel Bokassa and Idi Amin Dada known for displaying optimum barbarism. Wike now hunts his opponents like a game, with many beheaded, clubbed to death or buried alive like chicken.”

Rivers APC call for cancellation of polls

This came as the Rivers APC called for outright cancellation of the rerun

election in the 23 local government areas of the state, saying it was characterised by violence.

State chairman of the party, Dr Davies Ikanya, who spoke, yesterday, evening at the state secretariat of the party in Port Harcourt alleged that the Police connived with the PDP to manipulate the exercise.

Wike is wrong, we're out to ensure peace, order —Defence hqtrs

The Defence Headquarters, yesterday, debunked allegations by Wike that the military orchestrated and supervised the violence that characterized the polls.

Acting Director of Defence Information, Brig-General Rabe Abubakar, told Vanguard last night: "Our (military's) presence in Niger Delta is not exclusively for election but to ensure peace and order in the region and to ensure protection of lives and property of Nigerians.

"We also have oversight functions of protecting pipelines and ensuring that illegal economic sabotage activities do not take place. Kidnapping, piracy are also challenges we are there to checkmate. So nobody can say we are tied down to any particular individual or certain group because of any election or interest.

Regarding the accusation of Governor Wike, Abubakar said: "We are not joining issues with any personality. We are extremely professional; we are trained to maintain peace and orderliness. We will never join issues with any Nigerian. We are for everybody. We will checkmate anybody or group that wants to perpetrate crime or violence because that is why we are there. We belong to all Nigerians and cannot belong to a selective few."

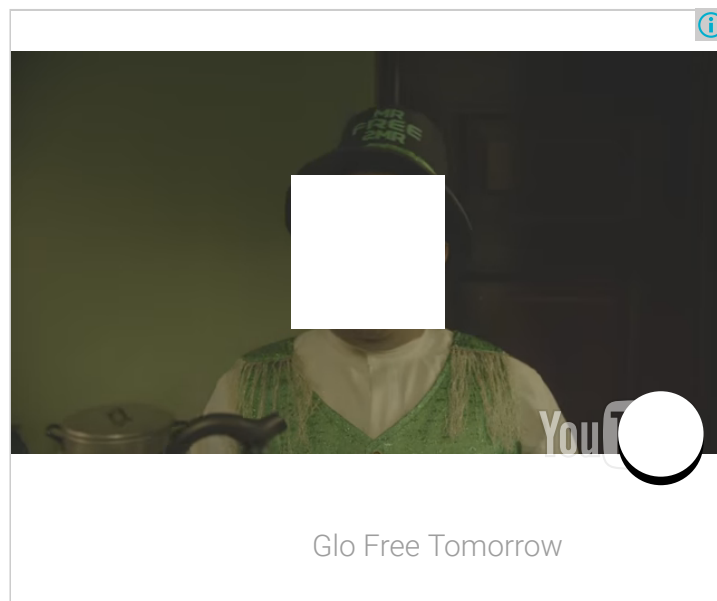
NYSC loses corps member

Meantime, the National Youth Service Corps, NYSC, has announced the death of a corps member, Okonta Samuel, with call-up number RV/15B/5539, during the re-run elections.

Mr. Samuel, who served at GCSS Ukpeliède, was shot dead by unknown gunmen in Ahoada West Local Government Area.

Vowing to assist in ensuring that the killers are fished out and brought to book, the NYSC prayed for the repose of his soul and for the family to have the fortitude to bear the loss.

NYSC also said two other corps members that were with the deceased at the time of the incident were rescued by security agents.



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