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7 dead, 11 rescued, 5 missing in poll-related tragedies

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Saturday's postponement of the presidential and National Assembly elections claimed no fewer than seven lives and left many people injured in some parts of the country.



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Nigerians were poised for what would have been the country's eight presidential election, when it was postponed five hours to the exercise by the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, claiming logistics challenges.

The deaths occurred in Cross River, Delta and Benue states.

Mr. Ayuk Ogar, Chairman of Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, in Bendeghe Ekiem Ward in Etung Local Government Area of Cross River State and four others were confirmed dead, following a clash with All Progressives Congress, APC, supporters in the area.

The clash occurred on Saturday morning when elders, chiefs and opinion leaders in the community convened a meeting for supporters of the two parties to sign a peace accord to end the frequent conflict between them in the community.

Dr Oscar Ofuka, Special Adviser to Governor Ben Ayade on Cocoa, who is from the community, narrated to *Vanguard* that he narrowly escaped death when the clash occurred.

His words: "We were convened by the elders and chiefs of our community to meet and sign a peace accord to forestall any outbreak of conflict between APC and PDP members, which has become rampant in the community in the run up to the election.

"We had gathered at the chief's palace when some people invaded the place with knives and guns and began to attack us and I only escaped by hair's breath."

Ofuka said in the recent past there had been over five clashes between APC and PDP members in the area and several lives were lost, with many persons injured.

"We have appealed to the Police Commissioner to intervene and beef up security in the community, but that is hardly the case and these attacks have become too frequent," he added.

He said those killed had been deposited at the General Hospital, Ikom, mortuary, while those with severe wounds were taken to the University of Calabar Teaching

Hospital.

Irene Ugbo, the state police command spokesperson, said more policemen have been deployed to the area to restore normalcy.

Warri

Again, two persons reportedly lost their lives when the boat they were travelling in, after the unexpected postponement of the polls, capsized at Ogheghe riverine community in Warri North Local Government Area of Delta State.

They had left their community as early as 6a.m. on Saturday morning, after the postponement news, for the cities, when a high tidal wave hit their boat.

Rescuers, however, saved the lives of 11 persons in the boat filled with 13 passengers.

The local government chairman, Mr. Aduge Okorodudu, who was among those that led the search-and-rescue mission, condoled with the families of the deceased and blamed INEC for the tragedy.

“If not for the sudden shift in the polls, these persons would not have left their community as early as 6am,” Okorodudu said and accused INEC of flopping in a national election that took it over three years to plan, “only to come up with flimsy excuse of logistics, as if logistics were not in the original plans of the commission.”

“The action of the Commission is like one who plans at the battle ground and it has thrown the entire council area into mourning,” the chair asserted.

... Ika APC Reps candidate alleges threat to life

Meanwhile, APC House of Representatives candidate in Ika Federal Constituency, Sebastian Okoh, has said politicians afraid of his victory in the polls could have sent the unknown gunmen that shot at his premises in Umunede, Ika North East Local Government Area, last Friday.

Okoh told journalists: "At about 1a.m., shortly after a meeting with my supporters, who had left for their homes, I heard sounds of shooting. They were directed at my house and my two cars parked outside my gate were hit.

"They did not come into my house because I think their purpose was not to take life. I am sure they consider me a threat to their victory in the forthcoming election. In spite of all they have done, I did not pull back."

Okoh urged the people of Ika federal constituency to remain law abiding and not to be destabilised.

... 2 in Sapele

Furthermore, two persons were said to have died, with five others missing after a boat carrying voters from Sapele to Koko, in Warri North Local Government Area of Delta State, capsized on Friday night.

Source at Pontu in Sapele, Delta State, from where the boat had set sail, said the voters were heading to Koko on Friday night to cast their vote when the engine of the boat suddenly developed fault.

After all attempts to set it sailing again failed, the passengers were said to have devised another means for the boat to ferry them to safety, when the boat capsized and sank.

Two persons were said to have died, and five others still missing, the source who craved anonymity said in tears.

When *Vanguard* visited Pontu in Sapele yesterday morning, relatives and friends of the missing were seen expressing anxiety over the safety of the missing persons, while tears flowed for the dead, one of them nicknamed *Dagrin*.

Vanguard also gathered that some of the passengers were teenage boys who were paid to head to the riverine area by a politician to cast their votes.

Ohimi APC Chair killed

Also, Chairman of APC in Ohimini Local Government Area of Benue State, Boniface Okloho, was killed on Saturday by unknown gunmen on his way home from a party function at Ehatokpe in Ohimini, an Idoma-dominated area that forms part of Benue South Senatorial District.

Vanguard gathered from sources in his community that the murdered chairman was just arriving home from a political party meeting when he was accosted and shot by unknown persons, who fled the scene afterwards.

While community sources said the killing might be connected to intra-party crisis, claiming that the deceased had been having running battles with members of his party over alleged party campaign funds, the Police said it was not politically motivated.

The source said: "His murder may not be unconnected to the alleged manner he shared the supposed funds given to him for campaigns in his area recently.

"It was alleged that there had been deep-rooted squabbles between him and other members over the manner party funds were unevenly shared among members in the area.

"The development has always been a source of crisis between him and party members because the disbursement pattern has never gone down well with

majority of the members.”

Contacted, the state Police Commissioner, Mr. Omololu Bishi, said Okloho’s death could be connected to an unfortunate robbery incident and not politically motivated.

Bishi said: “Our preliminary investigations revealed that the murder could be connected to robbery and not politically motivated. Our investigation is still ongoing, after which I will give you full details of what happened. But it has nothing to do with politics.”



TONY

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