

# By-election fiasco: When Omuo-Ekiti became a theatre of war

ON MARCH 25, 2021 11:11 AMIN **NEWS**

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- 5 dead, scores injured, properties destroyed
- 3 suspected thugs nabbed, remanded
- Fayemi, Police fume; APC, PDP in verbal war

**By Rotimi Ojomoyela**

IN what appeared like a dress rehearsal for what is to come in the 2022 governorship election in Ekiti State, Omuo-Ekiti Constituency 1 by-election was turned into a theatre of war last Saturday, leaving in its wake two dead and several critically wounded.

The election in the five Wards that constitute the Constituency, started on a peaceful note but went awry and all hell was let loose at Ward 7, Unit 007.

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Aside from shootings and killings, there were also reported cases of ballot snatching in some of the wards.

The level of mayhem that was unleashed by political thugs leaves much to be desired, as it took the country's electoral process several years backward.

The two major political parties in the state, the All Progressives Congress, APC, and its rival People's Democratic Party, PDP, have been engaged in blame game since the incident occurred but the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, would have none of that as it cancelled the election.

Juwa Adegbuyi, the late member representing the Constituency in the Assembly on the platform of the APC, would be turning in his grave over the mayhem that was unleashed by political thugs in his constituency all in a bid to find a replacement for him.

Five political parties, AA, APC, APGA, PDP and YPP, participated in the aborted election.

### **Fayemi fumes, orders arrest, prosecution of culprits**

Governor Kayode Fayemi, who paid an emergency visit to the scene of the crisis in Omuo-Ekiti, immediately ordered the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Mobayo

Babatunde to investigate the situation and bring the culprits to book.

Fayemi, accompanied by the lawmaker representing Ekiti South, Abiodun Olujimi; Commissioner of Police, Tunde Mobayo; Special Adviser, Security Matter, Brig-Gen Ebenezer Ogundana (retd) and other stakeholders said the development had nothing to do with politics, adding that the full weight of the law would be visited on everyone involved in the violence to serve as a deterrent to intending criminals.

Fayemi said he was disturbed by the turn of events in the election, adding: “There is no election that is worth the blood of any citizen of this state.”

He said: “This is unacceptable and those who are found culpable will have to face the maximum wrath of the law.”

### **3 suspected thugs nabbed, remanded**

In less than 24 hours after the order was given, the police swung into action, three culprits, who were fingered in the attack, were rounded up and immediately charged to court on Monday.

The three, who were arraigned before the Chief Magistrate Court on Monday were, Adeniji Olusola, 38, (m); Paul Folorunso, 45, (m) and Adebayo Serifat, 40, (f).

The suspects were charged with alleged conspiracy and murder.

The police counsel, an Assistant Superintendent of Police, ASP Martins Akala told the court that the defendants conspired to murder and murdered Babatunde Adeleye (m) and Bola Adebisi (f).

The defendants were also alleged to have attempted to murder Woman Sergeant Bukola Olawoye, Akanle Oluwadare, (m), Tosin Adeniyi (f) and Omolola Emmanuel (m).

The offences, according to the police prosecutor, contravened Section 516, 319(1) and 320 of the Criminal Code, Laws of Ekiti State, 2012.

Chief Magistrate Abdulhamid Lawal, consequently ordered the remand of the defendants at the correctional facility pending issuance of legal advice.

### **Why we suspended the poll —INEC**

INEC lamented the violence that characterized the election and lampooned politicians, accused them of frustrating its effort at conducting a free and fair poll.

Justifying its position to suspend the election until tempers cool down, the Resident Electoral Commissioner, Dr. Adeniran Tella said: “The exercise commenced on a good note in a peaceful and orderly manner. However, at about 10.00 am, there were reported cases of violence: In two (2) PUs of ward 09 (Obadore IV); polling unit 8 (Baba Egbe Selodouro/Odoule) & polling unit 9 (Beside Baba Egbe/Odouru/Odoule) i. Polling unit 07 (Aro Street/Aro) of ward 07 (Obadore II).

“In PU 07, ward 07, three voters were shot dead while a youth corper, a police woman and an INEC staff sustained gunshot wounds.

“Under this circumstance, the safety of electoral officials, security personnel and election materials, as well as the credibility of the process, cannot be guaranteed.

“The State Commissioner of Police is fully aware of the situation.

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“It is unfortunate that, despite the effort of the Commission in giving Nigerians free, fair, credible and inclusive election, some people appear to be unprepared for an improved electoral process.

“The situation is such that a conducive environment no longer exists for further electoral activity at the PUs and the Collation centres.

“Given this development, the Commission has suspended the election forthwith.”  
Uncertainty over Police woman’s health status

While the Ekiti State Police Command confirmed the mayhem unleashed on hapless voters and security agents by political thugs at Omuo-Ekiti, an unconfirmed report disclosed that the policewoman gave up the ghost late Sunday afternoon.

APC, PDP in verbal war

Expectedly, the two major political parties have expressed concern at the turn of events in Ekiti East Constituency 1.

While the APC condemned needless violence, bloodletting, the PDP accused the APC of perpetrating the violence.

### **You are known for violence—PDP**

The PDP Publicity Secretary, Raphael Adeyanju, said: “Everybody knows APC for violence. We know APC does not believe in free and fair elections and they are imposing their will on the people, which is a dangerous trend in the annals of this country.

“They planned to rig the election because they know they are no longer popular and you can see the will of the people is stronger than their will and intentions.”

### **We condemn needless violence, bloodletting—APC**

But in a swift reaction, the APC Director of Media and Publicity, Mr. Sam Oluwalana, said: “The APC is law-abiding, peaceful and as such has no reason to be violent. The party condemned the unwarranted shootings by suspected thugs at unit 7, ward 7 which is the polling unit of Senator Biodun Olujimi’s ward.

“Irrespective of the party or personality involved, no life should be lost over any election in Ekiti. Unfortunately, a very peaceful and transparent election turned so bloody.”

### **I escaped death by miracle, says Olujimi**

Narrating her experience, the lawmaker representing Ekiti South Senatorial District, Senator Biodun Olujimi, said she narrowly escaped being shot as political thugs invaded her polling unit at Ward 7 unit 007 and she had to be ferried out of the polling unit by party supporters.

Recounting how the crisis was triggered in her unit, Senator Olujimi said the election started peacefully before some APC thugs and compromised police officers started disrupting the voting process.

She said: "The leaders of APC came to the polling unit, in fact, we greeted warmly. After they left, some APC thugs who stayed behind pulled out guns and started shooting sporadically. This is the first time we would witness this. They picked the ballot box and ran away.

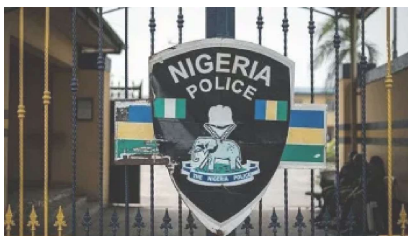
"A man died as he was trying to escape the scene. The policewoman guarding the ballot box was also shot in the head. The corps member and resident officer at the unit were hit by bullets. In totality, eight people were shot. Some dead and five are battling with their lives in the hospital receiving treatments."

Also, a member of the House of Representatives and a native of the town, Mr. Femi Bamisile, described the shooting as appalling and unbelievable, saying no election is worth the blood of any Nigerian.

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