

Gunmen on rampage in Imo, Anambra, Bayelsa • Kill INEC staff in Imo • Gunman shot by Police in Anambra • As hoodlums invade court, sack judge, litigants in Bayelsa, injure 3

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OWERRI—THE insecurity in the South East continued yesterday as unknown gunmen stormed the Ihitte Uboma local government area in Imo State and shot dead a staff of the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, Okorie Anthony, at the ongoing Continuous Voters Registration Exercise, CVR; and in Anambra, the police shot dead a gunman who was amongst those that attacked a police station in Nteje.

Similarly, there was pandemonium at a state high court located within the state judiciary complex in Yenagoa, as hoodlums invaded a sitting court, disrupted proceedings, chased away the judge, the lawyers and litigants and injured three persons.

Reports reaching Vanguard stated that the unknown gunmen, numbering about 12, yesterday, stormed Nkwo Ihitte Market in Imo State where staff of the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, were conducting voter registration exercise and shot dead the Commission's staff and another man.

An eye-witness, Chief Francis Okpegbuo, who was at the scene with eligible members of his family for the exercise, said they were at the village square for the exercise when the gunmen struck.

His words: "We had all gathered in the village square, in obedience to the directive that we should come out en-masse to register. Not long after we queued, the unknown gunmen stormed the place, shot sporadically and herded many into a room, with a threat to kill them. Others scampered for safety."

Another man who spoke to Vanguard anonymously disclosed that "the INEC staff, who was beaten with a machete by the gunmen, struggled to save the big box given to them by INEC and they shot him on the chest and he died on the spot."

According to him, another young man they met as they zoomed off was also shot as they suspected that he was trailing them.

When contacted, the INEC Public Relations Officer, PRO,

Imo State, Dr. (Mrs.) Chinenye Osuji, who spoke on behalf of the Resident Electoral Commissioner, REC, Professor Emeka Ezeonu, confirmed the incident.

According to the PRO, INEC has suspended the Continuous Voter Registration in the state following the attack on officials in Ihitte Uboma.

INEC position was made public via a press statement signed by the National Commissioner and Chairman, Voter Education Committee, Mr. Festus Okoye.

The statement read: "The Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, has suspended the Continuous Voter Registration Exercise, CVR, in Ihitte Uboma Local Government Area of Imo State.

"This is sequel to a report by the Resident Electoral Commissioner, REC, Professor Emeka Ezeonu, to the effect that today (yesterday), 14th of April 2022, Mr. Nwokorie Anthony, a staff of the Imo State office of the Commission, involved in the ongoing CVR exercise, was shot dead by unknown gunmen at Nkwo Ihitte, PU 004, in Amakohia Ward (RA 02) of Ihitte Uboma Local Government Area.

"The REC further reported that the State Office is making efforts to locate the whereabouts of the two remaining staff involved in the registration exercise.

"Prior to this incident, the Commission had suspended the CVR in Orsu and Njaba Local Government areas of the state on account of insecurity, while the exercise is taking place only at the INEC LGA office in Oru East, Oru West, Orlu and Ohaji-Egbema Local Government Areas of the state.

"The Commission extends its condolences to the family of Nwokorie Anthony and prays that God will grant them the fortitude to bear the loss. The incident has been reported to security agencies to unravel the circumstances that led to this unfortunate incident and bring the culprits to justice.

"We enjoin the President General of the various Town Unions in Imo State, as well as all the critical stakeholders, to protect the staff of the Commission engaged in national assignments. The safety and security of staff is of paramount importance to the Commission, particularly with the devolution of the voter registration exercise beyond our State and Local

Government Area offices nationwide, in our determination to serve Nigerians better."

Gunman killed during attack on police station in Anambra

In Anambra, one of the gunmen who attacked Nteje Police Station in Oyi local government area of Anambra State yesterday was gunned down by operatives of the State Police command.

The state Police Public Relations Officer, PPRO, Mr Tochukwu Ikenga said the Commissioner of Police, Echeng Echeng led his men to repel the attack.

According to him, luck ran out on the attackers when operatives of the command got a tip off and launched a counter attack on them which led to the death of one gunman, while a rifle and a magazine were recovered from him.

A statement by Ikenga read: "Anambra Police operatives led by CP Echeng Echeng at about 3am foiled an attack by gunmen at Nteje Divisional headquarters in Oyi LGA.

"The operatives recovered one type O6 rifle, one magazine and fifty-three live ammunition of 5.56mm and charms.

"The Commissioner of Police, CP Echeng led the crack squad by responding to the distress call as the station came under attack by the gang. The police operatives decisively dealt with the assailants.

"During the gun duel, one of the gunmen was neutralized and due to the superior fire of the police operatives, the assailants fled the scene.

"The station was secured and all police operatives and arms are intact".

The PPRO said the CP commended the officers and men of the command for their perseverance and painstaking efforts to weed out all criminal elements in the state.

3 injured as hoodlums invade court, sack judge, litigants in Bayelsa

In Yenagoa, Bayelsa State capital, three persons including two litigants and a court official, sustained injuries when

hoodlums invaded a sitting court, sacked the judge, the litigants and injured three persons. While the judge was hurriedly being whisked away, he was pelted with bottle water plastics.

The matter for hearing was the disputed ward, local government and state congresses of the state chapter of All Progressives Congress, APC.

Chairman of APC in Bayelsa State, Dr Dennis Otio- Odoni who reacted to the incident, distanced members of APC from the court invasion, alleging that those involved were suspected PDP supporters who were milling around the court premises.

He called on the police to fish out those behind the invasion of the court, adding that he was confident in the ability of the judiciary to adjudicate in matters concerning the party.

He said: "APC has nothing to do with the invasion of the Court. We are a law-abiding party and we have faith in the Judiciary over cases before it. We condemn the act in its entirety and call on the Police to fish out those behind it."

A chieftain of the party and one of the litigants told newsmen that those that tore his shirt and dealt him several blows were APC members and are well known to him.

"They tore my shirt and I escaped from the court with singlet and trouser. When I saw the boys, I never knew the plan was to disrupt the court and attack us," he said

Ugwuanyi swears ENSIEC chairman

By Anayo Okoli

ENUGU—GOVERNOR Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi of Enugu State, yesterday, swore in Dr. Michael Ezeugwu Ajogwu, SAN, as Chairman of the Enugu State Independent Electoral Commission, ENSIEC, for a second term, at the EXCO Chamber, Government House, Enugu.

Gov. Ugwuanyi also swore in Dr. Greene Anike-Nweze as ENSIEC Member 1 for a second term.

Dr. Ajogwu and Dr. Anike-Nweze were sworn in as ENSIEC chairman and member respectively following their reappointment by Gov.