

Rivers guber, assembly polls: 15 deaths unreported, Ogoni youths allege



...Reject INEC's results on March 18 polls in Rivers

...You have the tribunal to seek redress -INEC

By Egufe Yafugborhi

YOUTHS in Rivers state on Monday alleged that 15 persons died across Ogoniland during March 18 governorship and State Assembly elections that were not reported.

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National Youth Council of Ogoni People (NYCOP) made the claim during a protest to the Port Harcourt office of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Rivers where they also rejected results declared by the commission in Rivers state on the elections they described as a rape on democracy.

NYCOP President, Barinuazor Emmanuel, alleged, "What happened to us 18th March, 2023, was a rape on our democracy. INEC and some political parties denied us our will to vote. We voted in some places, but our votes did not count. Where we did not vote, they also manufactured votes for them.

"Our grandmothers, traders, youths, we, suffered to register for Permanent Voter's Card (PVC), suffered to also collect our PVCs. We paid transport from our respective homes to go to our polling units to vote. At the end, what we saw was death.

"Over 15 youths died in this election (governorship and House of Assembly). But the casualties were not reported in the media. We saw political thugs connived with INEC and hijacked voting materials, denying us our votes. Yet, we saw votes declared for some people.

"We are here today, to tell the world that we, Rivers youths, reject any result announced here (INEC Rivers office) given to some politicians. We say such results were not our will. We are also here to tell INEC that they are a shame to our democracy.

"1999, we were part of the process that fought for this democracy, MOSOP and NADECO. Our hope was that, by this time, we would be mature in our doings.

"2015, they behaved same way; 2019, they still behaved the same way. This time, they did the worst to us. We are telling INEC that whatever votes they allocated to some individuals are not our votes.

"We observed, since three days ago, if you go to our local government areas, they are busy uploading results on BVAS. Where are they getting those results from? Who gave them (politicians) those Bi-Modal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS)?"

NYCOP urged the Economic and Finance Crime Commission (EFCC) and the Department of State Security (DSS) to investigate reports of BVAS in the hands of some politicians in the state.

"We are calling on EFCC, DSS; we won't mention police because they connived with them to rape our democracy, to investigate those uploading results and arrest them", Emmanuel stressed.

Responding, the Head, Voter Education and Publicity Department, INEC, Rivers State, Mark Osulor, told the protesters, "I have heard your protest and I am going to relate as you have just said, to the management of INEC.

"Meanwhile, I will also implore you to have your material evidences from the polling units prepared to toe the right steps, where you can make this quest for correction of what happened, if there is any.

"The law has provided that it is the tribunal that has the utmost power to entertain such election petition. So, I will send this protest letter to the management of INEC and tell them exactly what you have just said as your request. Also, please, sheathe your swords."