

Lagos guber election was a sham, and utter disgrace to democracy

...Chief Olabode Ibiyinka George

As a Lagosian, I feel so shattered, so heartbroken that our democracy is now in shambles. What a disgrace! I am close to 80 years now but never in my life have I seen such a despicable and dishonourable way of not allowing people express their right to elect whoever they want. This election, in some places, was completely shambolic. What is going on? It is disheartening that Lagos State, the bastion of civility, humility, decorum, harmony and respect for the rule of law was, on Saturday, turned to a den of lunatics during the Governorship and House of Assembly elections.

This is no longer democracy. What happened on Saturday, March 18 in Lagos State was utter lunacy, a complete sham perpetrated by demented souls. Our forefathers who founded Lagos, the Aworin and others, will be angry in their graves at those power-hungry fellows who turned everything upside down in their quest to retain power at all cost.

We all know that 'Oro' is done in a rural setting, and in the night. But in Lagos, we saw some 'Oro' worshippers – fake or real – invoking spiritual insults on other Nigerians in broad daylight. This is a bastardisation of our culture and tradition.

Other states are running their elections smoothly and democratically without violence but reverse is the case in Lagos. During the Presidential and National Assembly elections on February 25, soldiers were seen on the road and there was civility. Thugs didn't mess up. There was complete peace. So, who ordered that the soldiers should be withdrawn during the Governorship and House of Assembly elections? Was their withdrawal ordered to ensure that thugs had a field day, snatching and burning ballot boxes and papers? When are we going to be civil in our approach to constitutional democracy? This is not the Lagos we used to be proud of. This election is a total disgrace to APC as a party and Nigeria as a country. Due to threats from thugs, many potential voters returned home in anger without voting. In many polling units, we watched videos of snatching of ballot boxes/papers by APC thugs. Ballot boxes and papers were also burnt. Thugs were seen



with dangerous weapons invading polling units, threatening voters to either vote for APC or leave. Some voters were matcheted and shot.

The tragic -comedy of the electoral charade was witnessed when a couple was turned back from a polling unit by APC thugs because they look like Igbo. Whereas they are full blooded Yoruba. Sisi Yemie, the affected woman, said in a video which has gone viral: "I was born in Lagos. I am a Lagos woman. This is my village but I was not allowed to vote because I don't look like Yoruba. My husband and I were not allowed to vote. They said we look like Igbo people. I can't believe this".

In the video, she was heard arguing with some APC thugs that she was born in Lagos but the blood-thirsty thugs were adamant and unyielding. Eventually, they were not allowed to vote. What a disgrace!

In democracy, you can't force anybody on the people. Let the will of the people prevail. Is this now a mob state? With what happened on Saturday, Lagos is now the centre of 'Wetie', with thugs on the rampage, attacking innocent citizens.

Those responsible for this despicable act should be ashamed of themselves and must be brought to justice. I watched videos of armed thugs moving from polling units to units, telling people not to come out and vote if they were not voting for APC. What an affront! What an insult! Is this no longer about democracy? Do we now have full-blown dictatorship in the land? Disenfranchising people who have a legal right to vote and excluding them through mob action is a clear

indication that Lagos is now under the rule of the mob.

Lagos obviously is being run by a criminal organised network. How else do you explain the level of violence and mayhem witnessed during the election? What we are now experiencing can be likened to international organised crime. Now, the only seemingly sane institution holding government to account, the media, also came under violent physical attack. Do we really have a government in Lagos? The first responsibility of government is the protection of life and property. Even that, the government in power failed woefully. The crimes committed at the last election against an unarmed peaceful people trying to exercise their lawful duty and responsibility is no different from war crimes and should be tried by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

At my age, I wonder, like Nathaniel in the Bible who when despaired wondered "if any good thing can come out of Nazareth." I am forced to ask myself the same question with events unfolding in Lagos. Can any good thing ever come out of Lagos State now? More importantly is the worrying and inciting statement by Bayo Onanuga against the lawful Igbo residents in Lagos who contribute immensely to the taxes accruable to the Lagos State Government. What authority does he have to make such an unguarded inciteful statement against the Igbo?

Bayo Onanuga is not a Lagosian by any standard. These fellows should not make such unacceptable comments against any Nigerian tribe in Lagos, more so that he himself is not a Lagosian. He should not come from his village and tell us who we can relate to in Lagos. Having lived in Lagos, he obviously has not imbibed the fine and civilised culture of Lagos. I want to appeal to all in Lagos that we should remain calm and peaceful. We must continue to trust in Almighty God to give us victory on every front as we continue the struggle in our collective cause for the liberation of our state. May God bless us all!

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