

REVOLTS ROCK APC OVER FLAWED PRIMARIES, HOW GOVERNORS WROTE ELECTION RESULTS

The All Progressives Congress is grappling with rising internal tensions following contentious outcomes of its governorship, National Assembly, and state Houses of Assembly primaries, with growing fears of defections, litigations and anti-party activities ahead of the 2027 general elections. Findings by *Sunday PUNCH* revealed that while some aggrieved members have already left the party, many others are still weighing the options between remaining in the APC or defecting to opposition platforms where they believe they may have better electoral prospects. From Lagos to Delta, Zamfara, Kogi, Plateau and Osun states, dissatisfied aspirants have lodged petitions, threatened legal action and demanded fresh primaries. The situation has deepened concerns within the ruling party over post-primary fallout that could weaken its electoral strength in 2027. No fewer than 54 serving federal lawmakers, including ranking senators and members of the House of Representatives, failed to secure re-election tickets during the APC National Assembly primaries held between May 16 and 18. The primaries were marked by intense contests, disqualifications and shifting local power structures, with several incumbents rejecting the outcomes and alleging manipulation by party officials. Some of the senators who lost include former Deputy Senate President Ovie Omo-Agege (Delta North); Ned Nwoko (Delta North), who lost to former Governor Ifeanyi Okowa; Gbenga Daniel (Ogun East), who lost to Governor Dapo Abiodun; Danjuma Goje (Gombe Central); Neda Imasuen (Edo South); and Diket Plang (Plateau Central).

Others are Osita Izunaso (Imo West); Emmanuel Udende (Benue North-East); Titus Zam (Benue West); Olubiyi Fadeyi (Osun Central); Saliu Mustapha (Kwara); and Isa Jibrin (Kogi East). The party also disqualified Ipalibo Banigo (Rivers West), Garba Maidoki (Kebbi South) and Benson Agadaga (Bayelsa East) from participating in the primaries. In the House of Representatives, those who lost include Majority Leader Prof Julius Ihonvbere (Owan Federal Constituency, Edo); Nicholas Mutu (Bomadi/Patani, Delta); Mike Etaba (Obubra/Etung, Cross River); and Eseosa Iyawe (Oredo, Edo). Others are Deputy Chief Whip Ibrahim Isiaka (Ifo/Ewekoro, Ogun); Ismail Kayode (Ifelodun/Oyun/Offa, Kwara); David Zachariya (Igalamela/Idah, Kogi); Tijani Ozigi (Okene/Ogori-Magongo, Kogi); and Mansur Musa Jega (Kebbi). The fallout has already triggered defections and political realignments. Omo-Agege joined the newly formed National Democratic Congress, while Senator Anthony Yaro defected to the People's Democratic Party after losing his return ticket under a consensus arrangement. Omo-Agege, alongside former Delta State House of Assembly Speaker, Victor Ochei, was granted waivers by the NDC to contest the Delta Central and Delta North senatorial seats respectively. Yaro said his exit followed developments within the APC in Delta State and consultations with political associates and supporters. He explained that his earlier decision to join the APC was motivated



by the desire to serve his constituents more effectively at the national level. He added that his latest decision might have unsettled his supporters in Gombe South Senatorial District, stressing that it was not driven by hostility toward the PDP. Other prominent figures who have left the APC include former Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Prof Isa Pantami, who joined the PDP after failing to secure the governorship ticket in Gombe State, and former Inspector-General of Police, Mohammed Adamu, who resigned after a failed governorship bid in Nasarawa State.

Concerns are mounting within the APC that more members could defect in the coming weeks. Party sources told *Sunday PUNCH* that several aggrieved politicians are currently consulting their supporters and political allies to decide whether to remain in the APC or seek alternative platforms ahead of 2027. A member of the House of Representatives from Ekiti State, Kolawole Akinlayo, described the primaries as fundamentally flawed. He said, "There was no election but results were written in Government House." In Lagos State, tensions over the primaries have further exposed internal divisions within the party. A senior party leader, who spoke on condition of anonymity, described the exercise as "madness." He pointed to intervention efforts by President Bola Tinubu's daughter and Iyaloja-General of Nigeria, Mrs Folasade Tinubu-Ojo. Tinubu-Ojo had earlier threatened to protest over alleged distortion of some results of the Lagos APC primaries. The party leader said her intervention was significant. "Iyaloja is not someone to be overlooked.

She cannot be asked to shut up because of her influence and large followership at the grassroots. She is also the daughter of the sitting president," the source said. One aspirant warned that unresolved disputes could deepen divisions within the Lagos APC. "Asiwaju (Tinubu) is becoming old and not as agile as he used to be 15 years ago. Let's be frank. What we have is a measure of cracks in the progressive family in Lagos. Someone won overwhelmingly and he is the popular and preferred candidate, yet they are messing with the results," the aspirant said. The aspirant also linked current tensions to past electoral outcomes in the state. "There was the issue of the last presidential election that Asiwaju lost in Lagos. Obi did not win because of religion or ethnicity. He won because of the frustration and bitterness of many APC members in Lagos. It was more of the anti-party issues that gave him victory," he added. The source further warned that internal dissatisfaction could have electoral consequences