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Nigeria: Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 9 June 2011

Information on elections in Ondo State in April 2007? Information on whether elections were rigged?

A 2007 report from the *International Crisis Group* states:

“Instead of providing security, the police were often deliberately used to scuttle the electoral process. There were several cases where they looked the other way while under-age voting, stuffing of ballot boxes and false thumbprinting occurred.²⁴ Sometimes they were used by PDP chieftains to hijack ballot boxes from electoral officials at gunpoint; in Ondo State, reportedly “soldiers and police also took part in moving ballot boxes and papers from one polling station to another”,²⁵ thereby facilitating massive rigging at some centres. In the state capital, Ondo city, they provided cover for PDP candidates to stuff ballot boxes in the homes of party chieftains; as a combined force of anti-riot policemen and PDP thugs moved round the polling stations picking up over 300 Labour Party members (mostly party agents), the PDP thumbprinted ballots and wrote in results as it pleased²⁶. Where INEC officials had been induced to falsify the figures at counting centres, police granted PDP agents easy access to assist staff, while barring agents of other parties.²⁷” (International Crisis Group (30 May 2007) *Nigeria: “Failed Elections, Failing State?”*)

The Lagos-based newspaper *This Day* reported the results of elections in Ondo State as follows:

“Meanwhile the results of the election, released by INEC's Public Relations Officer in the state, Mr. Olabimpe Awoniyi, showed that PDP won all the seats both at the Senate and the House of Representatives. The Senate result showed that Olajumoke polled 137,736 votes, Ondo North senatorial District, followed by Olateru-Olagbegi with 20,147 votes, while Mr. A.O. Abodare came third with 16,969 polls. In Ondo Central Senatorial District, Senator Gbenga Ogunniya of the PDP won for the third consecutive time with 184,555 polls while Labour Party candidate, Mr. P. A. Akinyelure came second with 54,087 votes. However, in Ondo South Senatorial District, the PDP won with 318,153 votes without presenting any candidate for the election.” (This Day (Lagos) (28 April 2007) *‘How PDP Rigged in Ondo’* Bagshaw, Ntai)

A report on the various April 2007 elections in Nigeria from the *European Commission* states

“For the purpose of observing the April elections eight organisations, Transition Monitoring Group (TMG), Federation of Muslim Women Association of Nigeria (FOMWAN), Labour Monitoring Team (LEMT), Women Environmental Programme (WEP), Muslim League for Accountability (MULAC), Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO) and Alliance for Credible

Elections (ACE) Nigeria - liaised under the umbrella Domestic Election Observation Groups to issue a common preliminary report. After the 14 April elections the Domestic Election Observation Groups concluded that "the level of violence, intimidation and ballot box snatching that took place in these states (Anambra, Adamawa, Delta, Edo, Enugu, Kogi, Nasarawa, Ogun, Ondo and Rivers) was so grievous that the results announced in them cannot be said to reflect the will of the people in the states." After the 21 April elections, the Domestic Election Observation Group which reported it deployed 50,000 election observers countrywide, issued another much harsher statement announcing that "based on the widespread and far-reaching nature of these lapses, irregularities and electoral malpractices, we have come to the conclusion that on the whole, the election was a charade and did not meet the minimum standards required for democratic elections." (European Commission (23 August 2007) *Nigeria: "Nigeria: Final Report; Gubernatorial and State Houses of Assembly Elections - 14 April 2007 - and Presidential and National Assembly Elections - 21 April 2007; European Union Election Observation Mission"*)

The report goes on to say

"In developments that cast further doubt on the integrity of the results, on 16 April, during a press conference in Abuja, the INEC Chairman announced the gubernatorial results in Delta and Ondo States even though the Resident Electoral Commissioners in both states had not yet announced the results at state level. Further, on Monday 23 April, the INEC Chairman, as Returning Officer for the presidential election, officially announced the results of the presidential elections before all the state results were collated in the collation centre. EU observers reported that at the time of the official INEC announcement, presidential results from Kano and Bauchi states had not been compiled or transferred to INEC HQ in Abuja, and indeed the presidential election results in Bauchi were not available before 25 April. Reports received by the EOM indicated that only 11 or 12 state presidential results had been collated by the time the INEC Chairman announced the official winner. In addition, INEC announced the PDP as the winner of the Ondo South senatorial election even though the PDP had expelled its candidate from the party before the elections and had no candidate in the race. Further, the high turnout rates for the Niger Delta region - Akwa Ibom State 83 per cent, Bayelsa State 96 per cent, Delta State 76 per cent, Rivers State 80 per cent - are highly implausible, particularly given the credible reports of low voter turn-out from those states. Similarly, voter turn figures of 60 per cent for Anambra State and 78 per cent for Gombe State are highly questionable bearing in mind that no voting took place in large parts of these states." (Ibid)

Under the heading the 2008 *United States Department of State's* annual report on Nigeria states:

"The April 2007 presidential, national assembly, gubernatorial, and state-level elections were marred by poor organization, widespread fraud, and numerous incidents of violence. The government, through INEC, undertook voter registration; however, this effort was poorly organized, seriously flawed, incomplete, and not widely publicized. Although INEC claimed 60 percent voter turnout nationwide, most independent observers estimated it at less than 20 percent. In some states, local and international observers reported that they were unable to locate any open polling stations where voting was supposed to be taking place, despite INEC's later claims of voter turnout well

above 50 percent for those polling stations. In other states, observers noted polling stations did not open until the late afternoon and were forced to close in the early evening due to darkness or state curfews, thereby restricting the number of voters who could be processed and allowed to vote." (US Department of State (11 March 2008) *Nigeria: "Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2007"*)

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.