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NIGERIA Election violence before and on polling day

Nigeria's first round of elections passed off largely successfully, despite violent incidents in several states in the run-up to polling day and on the day itself.

In one of the most serious incidents, one person died and six others were critically injured in a bomb explosion at a polling station in Maiduguri, Borno State. On Friday, April 8, eight people were reported to have been killed and 56 were injured when suspected Boko Haram gunmen stormed a police station in Shani, Local Government Area (LGA) as election materials were being sorted out for onward delivery to voting centers. The victims are said to include Alhaji Idrisa, Secretary of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Shani.

The days preceding the elections were marred by violence, which possibly contributed to a low turn-out in some areas. On Friday, April 8, at least 25 people were killed and over 200 seriously injured in an explosion at the offices of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Suleja, Niger State. Most of the dead were National Youths Service Corps members who were checking their names for the National Assembly elections.

On Thursday, April 7, a bomb exploded prematurely in the Mahuta suburb of Kaduna, killing its handler and wounding a suspected accomplice. This was followed by a controlled explosion, and the discovery of more bomb-making material in the area. The bombings followed a warning issued on March 28 by a group calling itself the "Federation of Islamic Council from the 36 states of the Federation" warning "Christian commoners, ordinary people resident in the North East, North West, and North Central" to leave immediately or face the consequences, including bombings of "polling booths, political party offices" and vehicles.

Meanwhile in Bauchi, where serious electoral fraud was uncovered in run up to the vote, attacks by armed Fulani men on non-Muslim areas have continued. On Thursday, April 7, at least ten people were killed in Bar Arewa village in Bogoro LGA when it was stormed at midnight by up to 1,000 men armed with guns and machetes. Almost every home in the village was destroyed and some elderly people were reported to have been burnt to death in their homes.

During the previous week approximately five people died in similar attacks on the villages of Yola and Goska Bong in Bogoro LGA. Attackers are thought to be part of a group of around 2,000 militants from Niger, Katsina, Kano, Sokoto and other northern states that have been attacking non-Muslim villages since April 10. In a comment to a Nigerian newspaper a survivor of one of the attacks said "They wanted to prevent us from voting in the elections, so they burnt houses so our voter cards would be burnt".

CSW's National Director Stuart Windsor said, "Although we remain concerned by reports of violence in some states, it is nevertheless encouraging that the first round of elections is being hailed as the best in Nigeria since 1999. However, the attacks on non-Muslim villages in Bauchi are part of a worrying trend that has gained momentum in the run-up to the elections, and appears to be part of an effort to disenfranchise the non-Muslim community. Given the absence of intervention by the Bauchi State Government, we once again urge the Nigerian Federal Government to step up security arrangements in areas where the violence is taking place in order to protect innocent civilians."