

## Election 2011 in Nigeria: Winners and Losers

Written by U.S Immigration News  
Friday, 06 May 2011 20:07 -

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Achieving credible elections in Nigeria had been a tall order, almost right from the first general election held in 1959. The best ever recorded free and fair election held in the country was the June 12, 1993 election which was annulled by the then head of the Military Junta, General Ibrahim Babangida, in spite of the overwhelming trans-ethnic support enjoyed by the late Chief M.K.O Abiola, the acclaimed winner of the said election. There have been several general elections after that, but until the just concluded elections, it appeared conducting credible elections in Nigeria had become elusive, especially with the massive rigging that plagued the 2007 general elections. It took years of civil suits (from election tribunals to the appellate courts) for some of the candidates that were rigged out in that election to reclaim their mandates, and sadly enough, some never did.

Dr. Goodluck Jonathan was sworn in as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to complete the tenure of the erstwhile President, late Alhaji Umar Yar'dua, who himself, was a product of the 2007 elections. One of the undertakings the new President made to Nigerians and indeed the International community was that he would ensure that the next general elections are free and fair. Considering the antecedent of the President's party, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the previous elections and the fact that the President was also running in the election, Nigerians were generally skeptical about the promise of a free and fair election. True to his promise, President Goodluck Jonathan, followed through on the electoral reforms initiated by his predecessor and also went a step further by appointing a well respected Professor of Political Science and former Chair of the **Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU)**, Professor Attahiru Jega to head the **Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)**.

Several novelties were introduced into the electoral processes in the 2011 elections as checks to rigging and other electoral malpractices. For instance, computers and fingerprint capturing devices were used in taking the eligible voters' personal information and finger prints to prevent multiple registrations. The commission also engaged a good number of the members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) as ad hoc staff to ensure the integrity of the exercise.

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Although the good intention of the electoral commission was well noted, the voters' registration exercise was spotted by technical hitches, and logistic problems. The finger prints machines, computers, generators and other equipments used did not function well enough to justify the billions of public funds spent procuring them. As much as people wanted to take the President for his words that their votes would count, an indeterminable but definitely not insignificant number of eligible voters were unable to register at the end of the exercise. Be that as it may, it was generally agreed that the new voters register is more dependable than previous ones.

On Saturday, 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2011, Nigerian electorates went to the polls to elect candidates that would represent them at the two chambers of the National Assembly and to their dismay, the election was called off, at a time when a good number of voters in some parts of the country had already undergone the accreditation exercise, one of the novelties introduced by the reforms. Initially, it was announced to have been postponed to the following Monday, 4<sup>th</sup>

April, 2011 due to delay in the delivery of the electoral materials by the Contractor, however, after what he described as "wide consultation with the stakeholders" the INEC chairman further postponed the elections to Saturday 9<sup>th</sup>

April, 2011.

On the new date, Nigeria's electorates went all out to elect candidates of their choice to represent them at the National Assembly. Apart from the exercise being transparent and largely peaceful, Nigerians and indeed election observers from the world over, witnessed for the first time since the 'June 12' election, a well organized voting exercise with the least incidents of ballot box hijacking and the general violence that had come to characterize elections in Nigeria. It is undisputable from the results that the candidates were indeed those who scored the highest votes in that election.

This is not to say the National Assembly election was perfect, but the hitches were well managed, as elections had to be postponed again to 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2011, in 15 Senatorial districts and 48 Federal constituencies due to security threats and logistic problems.

There are about sixty-three (63) registered political parties in the Country, however, the parties that featured prominently in the elections are Peoples Democratic Party (**PDP**), Action Congress of Nigeria (**CAN**),

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Congress for Political Change  
**(CPC)**

All Nigerian People's Party

**(ANPP)**

, Labour Party

**(LP),**

Accord Party

**(AP),**

Peoples' Party of Nigeria (

**PPN**

) and All Progressive Grand Alliance

**(APGA)**

.

Out of the 90 senatorial seats that were contested during the election, the ruling party, **PDP**, won 58 seats predominantly from the

**South – South, South-East**

and some part of the

**North-East**

and

**North-Central**

, Nigeria.

**ACN**

won

**14**

seats predominantly from the

**South-West**

and part of the

**South-South**

,

**ANPP**

won 7 Seats,

**CPC**

won 6 seats,

**LP**

won all the 3 seats in Ondo State,

**APGA**

won a seat in Anambra State, while

**DPP**

won a seat in Delta Central.

The result of the Federal House of Representative reveals that, out of the 218 seats that were

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contested during the election, 123 seats were won by **PDP**, **ACN** won 45 seats, **CPC** won 21 seats, **AN**  
**PP**  
won 11 seats,  
**LP**  
8 seats,  
**Accord Party**  
5 seats,  
**APGA**  
4 seats while  
**PPN**  
won a seat.

The results clearly showed that elections in Nigeria are no longer business as usual. Some of the serving senators and members of the House of Representative lost their bid to clinch return tickets to the National Assembly. The incumbent Speaker of the House of Representatives, Dimeji Bankole lost to the Action Congress Candidate, as did the daughter of a former President, Senator Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello. Some PDP ex-governors were also defeated in the election. PDP, the ruling party, lost in the wards of some of the party's chieftains like the former President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, the Vice President and Alhaji Lamido Sambo to mention just a few.

The Presidential election which came up the following Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> April, 2011 turned out much better than the earlier National Assembly Election in terms of logistics, operations and security. The election took place in all the 36 states of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory had Nineteen (19) candidates including the incumbent president vying for the office of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

At the end of the exercise, the Presidential Candidate of the PDP and the Incumbent President, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan had over 25% votes totaling **22,495,187**, in 33 states of the Federation, and scored the highest votes in Abia, Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bayelsa, Benue, Cross River, Delta, Ebonyi, Edo, Ekiti, Enugu, Gombe, Imo, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Oyo, Plateau Rivers, Taraba states, and the Federal Capital Territory Abuja.

The CPC's Candidate, Former Military Head of State, **General Mohammed Buhari (Rtd)** had over 25% votes in 17 states of the federation including the FCT, with votes totaling **12,214,853**.  
He scored the highest number of votes

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Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara while the ACN's candidate

### **Mallam Nuhu Ribadu**

scored the highest number of votes in Osun State with above 25% votes totaling

**2,067,301**

in Ekiti, Ogun, and Oyo.

Having fulfilled all the conditions precedent as provided by the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan has since been declared winner of the election by the Chairman of INEC.

Nigeria still has a long way to go in achieving sustainable development through democracy and good governance. However, the successful conduct of transparent polls has been a step taken in the right direction, a lot of commendations have been going to the leadership of INEC, the security agencies, serving members of the NYSC and the general public from the international community, civil societies and pro democracy entities, for staying committed to the achievement of credibility in the Country.

On the flip side, the gloom cast upon the success of the election was the spate of violence that broke out in some part of the Northern states believed to be the strong holds of **General**

### **Mohammed Buhari (Rtd)**

based on an erroneous report broadcasted on an international media on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup>

April, 2011, that the transparently collated election results were being rigged in favour of the incumbent President. Hoodlums from predominantly muslim states went on rampage destroying churches, properties, and government facilities, killing and maiming a lot of innocent citizens in the process.

Although the situation has been brought under control, it is hoped that in future polls, adequate security measures would be put in place to forestall such post election outbreaks. Overall, lessons learnt from the just concluded polls should be applied towards ensuring a more peaceful and credible polls in the future.