

YOUTHS' VIOLENCE AND ELECTORAL PROCESS IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC: A CASE STUDY OF OTA, OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined youths' violence and electoral process in Nigeria's fourth republic as an ugly phenomenon and its implication for democracy in Ota, Ogun State of Nigeria. No human collectivity can experience any meaningful and sustainable level of progress if it fails to systematically, deliberately and constructively engage and harness the drive and energy of the youths. Galtung states that "Violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations." Using survey method, through the administration of questionnaires to youths' in Ado-Odo, Ota, a simple random sampling technique was used to choose 472 respondents as the sample size out of 500 copies of questionnaire that were administered to the respondents to achieve the objectives of the study. The study established youths' violence does have a significant effect on the electoral process in Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria. The study concludes that most youths' that are perpetrators of electoral malpractices are unemployed, uneducated and idle, that is why they are bamboozled to beat up political opponents and people sympathetic to them. This study therefore advocates adequate and all-embracing empowerment community-based programmes. A youth violence prevention council should be set-up to study ways to reduce youths' violence, electoral crime and encourage healthy youth behaviour as well. Through this, the youths will gradually become relevant to Nigeria and then can be referred to as "the leaders of tomorrow".

Keywords: Youths, Violence, Electoral Process, Ado-Odo

INTRODUCTION

The bulging youth population, according to the NIC report, is a demographic feature that is linked with the "emergence of political violence and civil conflicts." In Nigeria, the federal government in 2008 acknowledged that about 80% of Nigeria's youth are unemployed and 10% underemployed (Daily Trust, 2008). In 2011, the Minister of Youth Development, Bolaji Abdullahi reported that 42.2 per cent of Nigeria's youth population is out of job. Depo Oyedokun, the Chair of the House

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Committee on Youth and Social Development revealed that of the over 40 million unemployed youths in the country, 23 million are unemployable and therefore susceptible to crime, hence the need to articulate what could be done to salvage the situation. The pace is increasing because most graduates lack relevant marketable skills.

These statistics are grim for a nation whose children and youths of age 0 - 35 constitute about 77 per cent or 105 million of its over 140 million population. This shows how the government over the years has showed very little interest in both children and youths in the country. University education development worldwide shows a direct relationship between the number of university graduates produced by a country and its economic and technological advancement. For example, United States with population twice that of Nigeria, has over 2,000 degree awarding institutions. Japan, having almost the same population as Nigeria, has over 600 universities. United Kingdom, having half our population, has 100 Universities. (Mustafa 2013) In the process of elective politics and governance, youths are either side-lined or excluded or when they are involved at all, they are mainly misused and abused to achieve the inordinate and perverse political ambition of the normless, lawless and selfish section of the Nigerian political class. (Preyekuro, 2011)

Youth all over the World are fondly called leaders of tomorrow. This is not farfetched from the fact that they are characterized with energy and mental alertness (Nnamani, 2003; 5). This energy is either used positively or negatively depending on the individual or in some cases the society. According to Ekwuruke (2007:2) this is the period of vigour curiosity spiritedness action and inexperience. Most of these colleges and universities drop-outs often end up in urban centres in search of menial jobs. Some other end-up on the streets, high way junctions, and traffic hawking different items as "mobile super markets (Ekwuruke, 2007: 2). All these societal problems further contribute to the continuous problem of youth violence and electoral process which most of the Nigerian youths are constantly involved in today. Assertively, the advent of civil rule and the rise of electoral violence, and youth restiveness in general, a lot is yet to be done in understanding the nexus between the youth's violence and electoral process in the Nigerian "democratic context" (Moveh, 2009).

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

This paper x-rays the relationship between youths' violence and electoral process in Nigeria's fourth republic. This paper discusses the role the Nigerian youths' play in the electoral process; the positive or negative effect they had on its democratic process; and what makes youths' easy targets for recruitment into electoral violence in Ado-Odo, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria.

This paper aims at the following:

- to examine the effect between youths' violence and electoral process in Nigeria
- to examine the role youths play in the electoral process
- to examine reasons why youths are easy target for electoral violence

Population

Ado-Odo Ota has an area of 878 km² and a population of 526,565 at the 2006 census (Wikipedia, 2013). The population of this research work comprises of male and female respondents from Ado-Odo Ota Local Government Area of Ogun State who can give the appropriate answers. A simple random sampling technique was used to choose the 472 respondents as sample size. Of which, it was a 500 copies of questionnaire that were administered to the respondents to achieve the objectives of the study. These 472 randomly selected respondents represented the entire population with a view to ascertain the significant relationship between youths' violence and electoral process in Ado-Odo, Ota.

Method

Quantitative data generated through the field work was analysed and processed through electronic means. The electronic application used was Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 17.0) software. The information collected was carefully analysed using simple percentage; descriptive; and regression. Interpretations were presented in tabulated form for easy understanding. Source of data were both primary and secondary source. The research design adopted a survey method. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis was generated. Questionnaire was administered to elicit the required information. The secondary sources include relevant publications - textbooks, newspapers, journals, as well as articles on the subject matter.

Instruments

The instrument for data collection is the questionnaire divided into three parts. The first section gathered bio-data of the respondents, the second section helped in gathering matters relating to the role youths play in electoral process, while the third section helped in gathering information on the youths as easy target for electoral violence. The five point likert-scales were adopted in formulating the items in the second and third sections of the questionnaire. The respondents were made to respond to the questions in the first section, second section and the third section by choosing any of the items. The likert- style rating scale method of questionnaire design enables researchers to ask respondents on how strongly they agree or disagree with a statement or series of statements on a five point scale, e.g. 5 (strongly agree), 4 (agree), 3 (undecided), 2 (disagree), 1 (strongly disagree).

CONCEPTUAL AND OPERATIONAL CLARIFICATION

Contemporary Nigeria has become a conflict prone society with the youths at the heart of most violent conflicts in the country. A recent study suggests that the youths are prosecutors of 90-95% of violent conflicts in Nigeria (Omeje, 2007).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this paper work is Johan Galtung formulated theory of violence based on the recognition that direct, personal violence (from bar brawls to international wars) is only one of three shapes which violence assumes. The other two categories of violence, namely structural (or indirect) and cultural violence are present in society in more subtle, but not less

damaging ways (Confortini, 2006). For instance, Galtung acknowledges that poverty (structural violence) or media glorification of violence (cultural violence) are also forms of violence. Furthermore, Galtung conceives of peace as both negative (absence of direct violence) and positive (presence of social justice). Galtung states that “*Violence is present when human beings are being unencumbered so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations.*” (Galtung, 1975).

The opposite of violence is peace, which encompasses “*peace with nature, peace between genders, generations and races, where the excluded are included not by force, and where classes, nations and states serve neither direct nor structural violence.*” (Galtung, 2002) Galtung first elaborated the concept of violence in his “Violence, Peace and Peace Research” in 1969, when he introduced the crucial differentiation between personal and structural violence (Galtung, 1969). In 1990, he introduced the concept of cultural violence (Galtung 2002). Whereas personal violence is violence with a subject, structural violence is violence without a subject (Galtung 2002) and cultural violence serves as legitimization of both personal and structural violence.

In structural violence, “violence is built into the structure, and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances.” It is the unequal distribution of resources, and the unequal distribution of the “power to decide over the distribution of resources” that give rise to structural violence. In this interpretation, resources are seen as not only material or economic, but also nonmaterial, such as education, health care, etc. So, for Galtung, “when one husband beats his wife there is a clear case of personal violence, but when 1 million husbands keep 1 million wives in ignorance there is structural violence”.

Youths

A youth is a young person especially a young man or boy; it refers to young people collectively. It can be seen as the freshness and vitality characteristic of a young person (Word web Dictionary, 2010). Nigeria’s population is predominantly young (Olujide, 2008). According to Nigeria’s National Youth Development Policy (Olujide, 2008), the youth comprises all young persons of ages 18 to 35, who are citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This category represents the most active, the most volatile and yet the most vulnerable segment of the population. They are individuals (male or female) above ten but below thirty years of age. The youth has also defined as the period in an individual’s life which runs between the end of childhood and entry into the world of work (Onuekwusi and Effiong, 2002).

Commitment to the enlightenment of the youth has been reinforced by resolution of various international organizations which draw attention to the need to concretely address the problems of the youth and empower them (Olujide, 2008). These youth must be developed intellectually, morally, socially and with relevant skills to face a rapidly advancing technological world (Laogun, 2002). A review of studies such as Fenley (1986), Odusanya (1972) and Olujide (1999), have also revealed that the youths constitute the highest percentage of the Nigerian population, and therefore

are seen as “*vital sources of manpower for development*”. They are rightly seen as leaders of tomorrow. Hence, the kind of education (formal or informal) that youth are exposed to or have access to will determine the nation’s overall development (Odusanya, 1972, Olujide, 1999).

Violence

Violence means to make a person suffer physically, affectively and morally (Defrance, 1992) by means of force or putting to shame (Thys, 2003). Violence is usually considered a severe form of aggression (Moser, 1987). There are many types of violence - domestic violence, criminal violence, interpersonal violence, proactive violence (violence or the threat of violence to affect outcomes and decisions), reactive violence (post-event protesting against unfavourable outcomes) (Meadow, 2009), etc. There are also many types of aggression - physical aggression, verbal aggression (Smorti, Menesini, & Smith, 2003), direct aggression (action taken against the source of frustration), indirect aggression (action taken against an object or person other than the instigator), suicide (aggression expressed inwardly, not outwardly) (Allen, 1972).

Process of Electorate

In Nigeria, the Federal Government maintained the existing Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as the sole agent (Commission) in charge of the organization and conduct of elections. All political parties regardless of background and spread, intensively and massively campaign round the country though some were localized. They also used every resource, animate and inanimate, to campaign and spread their “gospels”. The incumbent at all levels particularly use the state resources to campaign to the detriment of others. Monetary inducements were alleged to be very rampant at some levels and sections of the country (Babalola, 2011). According to (Morlino, 2000: 17), as the overwhelming majority of democratic legal systems have established this collection of civil rights, there are two primary dimensions that appear to be important for a good democracy. The first pertains to the capacity to enrich the legacy of rights and freedoms enjoyed by citizens without limiting or damaging others. The second concerns the actual procedures by which these rights are granted to all residents in a certain area. This latter takes us back to the issues of efficiency that were raised in the discussion on the rule of law.

Electoral Processes

The electoral process is a total process that includes registration of voters, identifying the political parties to be voted for, voting, counting of votes, and declaration of election results. This process is the foundation of civil societies. Elections are used as a means by which representatives and policies are decided. The choice between political parties or individual candidates is made through elections. John Stuart Mill argued that:

There is no difficulty in showing that the ideally best form of government is that in which the sovereignty or supreme controlling power in the last resorts is vested in the entire aggregate of the community; every citizen not only having a voice in the exercise of that ultimate sovereignty but being at least occasionally called on to take

an actual part in the government, by the personal discharge of some public function, local or general. (186) (Emphasis added)

According to Ologbenla (2003), an electoral system may be defined as a process in which the mode of coming to power or change of government is decided in a particular country at a given time.

Youths and Violence

The concept of youth has been subjected to diverse interpretations and flexible usage. At one level the youth are conceptualized in terms of their futuristic role as leaders of society. However, in his interrogation of the youth as a category Obi (2006: 5), aptly notes that:

The categorization of the youth as future leaders assumes the non-interrogation of the existing power relations in society and is a recipe for preparing the youths to perpetuate a particular mode of power relations that suggest a permanence of structures of dominance and interests, but with the entry and exit of occupants' overtime

Obi continues:

This conceptualization also suggests the sub-ordination of youths to the power structure controlled by elders in order to facilitate system stability, cohesion and continuity. Political time then becomes a conveyor belt that takes the loyal and disciplined youth into future power, when the elders pass into myth and history (Obi; 2006: 6)

It is also important to understand that for some youths particularly in the poverty stricken economies of the developing world, Nigeria inclusive, what is paramount is survival. They must first of all survive before they can begin to think of fighting for a future. Indeed, as Obi (2006: 9) notes:

Where the very fact of survival is embedded in conflict, then the struggle for survival for the future is ambushed by more violence that sucks in young people into the vortex of class, ethnic, generational, communal and political agendas.

DATA PRESENTATION

The result below (Table 1) shows the Cronbach's alpha is 0.802 which indicates a very high level of internal consistency for our scale with this specific sample. Therefore the research instrument is reliable with a coefficient of 0.802 which indicates 80.2% reliability (Ojo, 2003; Oyekun & Ayodele, 2010).

Table 1: Data Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.802	.817	12

Source: Fieldwork (April, 2013)

Table 2: Bio-Data of Respondents

Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Sex			Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Age		
			Variables	No.	%
			18-25	47	10.0
Variables	No.	%	26-30	236	50.0
Male	377	79.9	31-35	142	30.1
Female	95	20.1	36-Above	47	10.0
Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status			Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Academic Qualification		
Variables	No.	%	Variables	No.	%
Single	284	60.2	Primary Education	311	65.9
Married	141	29.9	Secondary Education	66	14.0
Divorced	47	10.0	Tertiary Education	95	20.1
Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Occupation			Total	472	100.0
Variables	No.	%	Source: Fieldwork (April, 2013)		
Government	47	10.0			
Unemployed	284	60.2			
Student	94	19.9			
Self-employed	47	10.0			
Total	472	100.0			

The result above (table 2) shows that male gender dominated the population sample. A total of 377(79.9%) participants were male, the remaining 95(20.1%) were female. The survey was dominated by 236(50.0%) participants within the age bracket 26 – 30 years, about 142(30.1%) within the age bracket 31 – 35 years, while the remaining were within the age brackets 18 – 25 and 36-above shares 10.0 percent respectively. As typical of a nation with higher population, a great proportion of singles dominated the study with 284(60.2%) participants; 141(29.9%) were married, while the remaining 47(10.0%) were divorcee.

The result sample shows that primary school certificate holders dominated with a total 311(65.9%); about 95 (20.1%) were tertiary certificate holders; and the lower proportion of 66(14.0%) participant were secondary school certificate holders. The jobless dominated the survey with

284(60.2%) participants; about 94(19.9%) were students; 47(10.0%) were employed by government establishments; and the remaining 47(10.0%) were self-employed.

Table 3: The Roles Youths Play in Electoral Process

Variables	SA No./%	A No./%	U No./%	D No./%	SD No./%
As body guards to politicians during elections	237(50.2)	235(49.8)	-	-	-
Carry guns and other dangerous weapons during elections	378(80.1)	94(19.9)	-	-	-
Hijack ballot boxes during elections	237(50.2)	235(49.8)	-	-	-
Are made to manipulate figures during elections	142(30.1)	330(69.9)	-	-	-
Beat up political opponents and people sympathetic to them	283(60.0)	189(40.0)	-	-	-
Threaten people from voting for candidates of their choice	48(10.2)	377(79.9)	-	47(10.0)	-
Stop people from voting for candidates of their choice	236(50.0)	142(30.1)	94(19.9)	-	-
Are made to maim and kill candidates of opposing parties	143(30.3)	235(49.8)	94(19.9)	-	-
Destroy properties of candidates of opposing parties	284(60.2)	188(39.8)	-	-	-
Disrupt election rallies of opposing parties	237(50.2)	235(49.8)	-	-	-

Source: Fieldwork (April, 2013)

The result (table 3) shows that youths in Ota are made body guards to politicians during elections because 237(50.2%) participants strongly agree. It also shows that 378(80.1%) participants strongly agree that youths carry guns and other dangerous weapons during elections. That figures are manipulated during elections, 142(30.1%) participants strongly agree; and the remaining 330(69.9%) as well agree. From the survey 283(60.0%) participants strongly agree that youths in Ota are made to beat up political opponents and people sympathetic to them; about 377(79.9%) agree; and 47(10.0%) participants disagree that people were threatened from voting for candidates of their choice.

The result (table 3) further shows that 236(50.0%) participants strongly agree; and 94(19.9%) were undecided that youths in Ota are made to stop people from voting for candidates of their choice. Nearly 235(49.8%) agree; and 94(19.9%) were undecided that youths in Ota are made to main and kill candidates of opposing parties. Closely 284(60.2%) participants strongly agree that youths in Ota are made to destroy properties of candidates of opposing parties. Lastly, (table 3) shows that 237(50.2%) participants strongly agree; and also 235(49.8%) as well agree that youths in Ota are made to disrupt election rallies of opposing parties.

Table 4: Youths as Easy Target for Electoral Violence

Variables	SA No./%	A No./%	U No./%	D No./%	SD No./%
Most youths that get involved in electoral violence are unemployed	331(70.1)	141(29.9)	-	-	-
Most youths that are perpetrators of electoral malpractices are uneducated	188(39.8)	284(60.2)	-	-	-
Most youths that are perpetrators of electoral malpractices are unskilled	190(40.3)	282(59.7)	-	-	-
Most youths that get involved in electoral violence are children of poor parents	329(69.7)	143(30.3)	-	-	-
Do you believe in the future of Nigerian Democracy	47(10.0)	236(50.0)	95(20.1)	94(19.9)	-

Source: Fieldwork (April, 2013)

The result (table 4) shows that 331(70.1%) participants strongly agree and 141(29.9%) agree that most youths that get involved in electoral violence are unemployed; 188(39.8%) strongly agree, 284(60.2%) agree that most youths that are perpetrators of electoral malpractices are uneducated; 190(40.3%) strongly agree, 282(59.7%) agree that most youths that are perpetrators of electoral malpractices are unskilled; 329(69.7%) strongly agree, 143(30.3%) agree that most youths that get involved in electoral violence are children of poor parents; and lastly 47(10.0%) strongly believe in the future of Nigerian Democracy, about 236(50.0%) agree, 95(20.1%) were undecided while the remaining 94(19.9%) disagree in the future of Nigerian democracy.

Research Hypothesis

This paper is undertaken with a view to confirming or refuting the following hypothesis;

H₀ Youths violence does not have any significant effect on the electoral process in Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria

H₁ Youths violence does have a significant effect on the electoral process in Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria

Linear Regression Analysis

This section shows three main tables required to understand the test results from the linear regression procedure, assuming that no assumptions have been violated.

Table 5: Model Summary Table

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.250 ^a	.062	.060	.47504

a. Predictors: (Constant), Youths are made to beat up political opponents and people sympathetic to them

The R value is 0.250 which represents the simple correlation. It indicates a low degree of correlation. The R² value indicates how much of the dependent variable, "electoral process" (i.e.

most youths that are perpetrators of electoral process are uneducated), can be explained by the independent variable, "youths' violence" (i.e. youths are made to beat up political 'opponent and people sympathetic to them). In this case, 6.2% can be explained, which is very low. Better still, this means that our model explains 25.0% of the variance "youths' violence to electoral process" (i.e. 'youths are made to beat up political opponent and people sympathetic to them' to 'most youths that are perpetrators of electoral process are uneducated').

Table 6: Anova Table

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	7.057	1	7.057	31.274	.000 ^a
	Residual	106.061	470	.226		
	Total	113.119	471			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Youths are made to beat up political opponents and people sympathetic to them

b. Dependent Variable: Most youths that are perpetrators of electoral malpractices are uneducated

The result (table 6) indicates that the regression model predicts the outcome variable significantly well. The Sig. column shows the statistical significance of the regression model that was applied. Here, $p < 0.001$, which is less than 0.01, and indicates that, overall, the model applied can significantly predict the outcome variable. Besides, the result also indicates 31.274 fcal at the associated significant level 0.0001 which is far less than the conventional level of 0.005.

Therefore, the null hypothesis represented with H_0 was rejected, and it was established that youth's violence does have a significant effect on the electoral process in Nigeria. The alternate hypothesis represented with H_1 was accepted, meaning electoral process is dependent on youths' violence in Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Table 7: Coefficients Table

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.252	.066		18.913	.000
	Youths are made to beat up political opponents and people sympathetic to them	.250	.045	.250	5.592	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Most youths that are perpetrators of electoral malpractices are uneducated

Table 7 provides the information needed to predict 'electoral processes' from 'youths' violence'. We can see that both the constant and predictor contribute significantly to the model (by looking at the Sig. column). By looking at the B column under the Unstandardized Coefficients column, we can present the regression equation as: electoral processes = 1.25 + 0.3 (x), where x is youths' violence. The implication of this result is that youths that are made to beat up opponent and the people sympathetic to them because of they are uneducated. Therefore, there is immediate need to

implementing voter and civic education intensively and on a large-scale to empower citizens; and empowering the security agencies to curtail the threat and the actual incidence of violence in and around the electoral process.

Conclusion

The paper examines youths' violence and electoral process in Nigeria's fourth republic. In most instances these violent roles are assigned to the youths by political classes that have deliberately refused to imbibe and practice requisite democratic norms, values and tradition. Secondly, the paper was also able to establish that youths are vulnerable instruments of electoral violence as a result of dislocated and poor parental background, poor education, unemployment and underemployment, moral decadence and as well as political manipulations by an irresponsible political class. Moreover, the paper established that there is a significant effect between youth's violence and electoral process in Ado-Odo Ota, Ogun State of Nigeria. Electoral process is dependent on youths' violence, therefore, the study concludes that most youths that are perpetrators of electoral malpractices are unemployed, uneducated and idle, that is why they are bamboozled to beat up political opponents and people sympathetic to them.

Finally, preventive plans involving technical assistance, community-based services, inter-agency coordination and comprehensive data collection, best practices, state wide resources and collection of state specific data should be put in place. A youth violence prevention council should be set-up to study ways to reduce youth violence electoral crime and encourage healthy youth behaviour as well. There should also be a broad prevention strategies with the state department of education with developing comprehensive action for preventing violence in each local government areas in Ogun State, utilizing skill building and youth development strategies.

Recommendations

The strategy of educational counselling should be emphasized. The years of ignorance are over, especially in light of the Millennium Development Goal of 2015 "education for all". Opportunity for formal and non-formal education for the youths will ensure political consciousness, knowing and defending their fundamental human rights. Counsellors can teach the virtues of "give-and-take" (tolerance) in politics and human rights in the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions. Based on findings from this paper, the following recommendations are made towards safeguarding bearable youths' violence through constructive socialization and involvement of the youths in the democratic structures especially the electoral process. In recognition of the role desperate socio-economic conditions play in youths' involvement in electoral violence, adequate and effective all-embracing empowerment programmes must be put in place.

Youths should be economically empowered through sincere, participatory and youth oriented skill acquisition and employment generation scheme. Socially, the youths could be empowered through civil orientation and educations to enable them understand their roles (rights and duties) in society. And they could be empowered politically through meaningful political socialization and

constructive participation in politics. The youths should be made to be aware that they are potential leaders of tomorrow. And that no politician ambition is worth their blood and future. Youths as the doorways to a peace continuum must be exposed to peace education. It is expected that peace education will help to redress the culture of violence and aggression and also inculcate the value of peaceful coexistence and non-violence among young persons and adults alike. The youths have to know what peace is and guard themselves against embracing or being used to foment violence.

The current electoral reform efforts should be pursued with more vigour in order to draft enforceable and effective electoral laws that could confront the menace of electoral malpractices including electoral violence. The civil society represented by several civil liberty non-governmental organizations and labour unions must pressurize the government to put in place stiff electoral laws that will make electoral fraud, a heinous crime against the citizen and state. If there is going to be any hope for democracy in Nigeria, politicians found guilty of electoral fraud and all those that benefited from it one way or the other should no longer treated with kid gloves and palliatives. They must be made to face stringent and long lasting legal penalties and sanctions. It is hoped that this measure will serve as deterrence against any form of political lawlessness and violence.

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