

NIGERIA CIVIL SOCIETY  
**SITUATION ROOM**

**SITUATION ROOM'S PRELIMINARY STATEMENT ON THE KOGI STATE GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION 2019**

**Issued in Lokoja at 2.00pm: Friday, 15<sup>th</sup> November 2019**

On Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2019, residents of Kogi State will come out to vote in the Governorship Election. The Nigeria Civil Situation Room has reconvened in Lokoja to observe the Governorship Election, and has deployed over one hundred election observers across the 21 Local Government Areas.

This Governorship election is the first major election since the 2019 General Elections and against a tense electoral environment. It is our expectation that INEC and other election stakeholders including security agencies will make every effort to improve on the quality and credibility of the General Elections.

Kogi State has a history of electoral violence, as well as a high level of political thuggery when compared to other States of the Federation, and has had numerous cases of inconclusive elections as a result. Presently, Situation Room has received reports of pre-election violence in many parts of the State, prominently Anyigba in Dekina Local Government.

Accordingly, Situation Room hereby outlines its expectations for the Kogi State Governorship Election 2019 as follows:

1. INEC and Election Administration:- Situation Room expects an improved administration and management of the 2019 Kogi State Governorship Election and asks the INEC to take steps to hold election officials to account for any partisan activities or behavior. Situation Room commends INEC for early deployment of sensitive materials and officials ahead of the election-day.

Situation Room also calls on INEC to resist pressure from partisan political interests that could derogate on the conduct of free and fair elections. Situation Room notes the position of INEC regarding the use of the Smart Card Readers in the State election and welcomes the Commission's insistence that no election will hold without the Card Readers.

Situation Room calls on INEC to limit the abuse in the collation process as happened in the 2019 General Elections by taking steps to carry out an effective and transparent collation of results, open and with unfettered access to designated Centres. INEC should also insist on complete enforcement of the new "Operational Guidelines for Police Officers on Election Duty" to provide adequate security for its officials, party agents and observers rather than become active participants in collation and undermined the process.

2. Security Agencies:- Situation Room will like to commend the Nigeria Police Force and other security agencies ;for developing Operational Guidelines for Police Officers on Election Duty. It is hoped that Police officers engaged in the Governorship Elections are

already trained on these guidelines, and will be enforced to the latter. Situation Room will watch out for the level of enforcement of these guidelines.

Further, we would like to restate the provisions of S. 29 (3) of the Electoral Act which states that the “deployment of Nigeria Armed forces for elections shall be at the request of INEC and only for the purpose of distribution and delivery of election materials and protection of election officials”. Situation Room calls on the Armed Forces to restrict themselves to these responsibilities as defined by INEC and the electoral law.

Owing to the high stakes in the Governorship election and the increasingly tense political environment, the potential for serious local instability that may further exacerbate Nigeria’s security challenge as a whole, is real. Therefore, Situation Room calls on the security services to demonstrate their commitment to non-partisan support to electoral security, and ensure that it provides adequate security for the elections, in a manner that does not allow or encourage violence to be used as a tool for vote suppression.

We further call on the Police Force to document evidence of violence as well as infractions and their perpetrators in order to speedily bring offenders to book.

3. Political Parties:- Situation Room calls on political parties participating in the Governorship election to take part in the elections devoid of perpetrating violence, vote buying or other electoral malpractices. Situation Room further calls on political parties to restrain their supporters from election violence.

Situation Room also calls on the parties to make sure their party agents are represented at every level of the elections.

Conclusion:- Situation Room calls on all eligible voters to come out freely to exercise their civic responsibility on Saturday, 16<sup>th</sup> November 2019. Situation Room expects that INEC and indeed all stakeholders in the electoral process would have taken lessons from the challenges of the 2019 General Elections and work towards delivering peaceful and credible Governorship Election in Kogi State.

-----  
**SIGNED:**

*Dudu Manuga and Celestine Odo*

*For: Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room*

The Situation Room is made up of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working in support of credible and transparent elections in Nigeria and includes such groups as Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC), CLEEN Foundation, Action Aid Nigeria, Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), Proactive Gender Initiative (PGI) Enough is Enough Nigeria, WANGONET, Partners for Electoral Reform, JDPC and YIAGA Africa. Others are Development Dynamics, Centre for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD), Partners West Africa Nigeria (PWAN), Stakeholder Democracy Network, Human Rights Monitor, Reclaim Naija, CITAD, Nigerian Women Trust Fund, Alliance for Credible Elections (ACE), CISLAC, and several other CSOs numbering more than seventy.