

Situation Room Calls for Peaceful Governorship Elections in Kogi and Bayelsa States

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The Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room calls on the major political parties to curb plans for violence in the coming polls in Kogi and Bayelsa States. The utterances and actions coming out of these States in relation to the Governorship elections is alarming. There have been reports from our observers and stakeholders of preparations for violence and abuse at these polls which calls into question the commitment of the parties and candidates to legitimate, peaceful elections.

INEC has also warned at the conclusion of their meeting with security services of the mobilisation of political thugs and gangs ahead of the polls. We call on the security services to take all necessary steps to mobilise strategically for political violence, and pay particular attention to preventing both real and fake uniformed personnel from becoming part of such abuse. Security services also need to show they can provide an effective non-partisan response that prevents further erosion of confidence in our polls.

Situation Room notes that there are already reports of violence ahead of both elections, and persistent accounts of increasing intimidation and mobilisation and arming of youths particularly in Kogi State. Other accounts refer to stockpiles of both arms and security personnel uniforms.

These conditions are reminiscent of pre election conditions in States that exhibited serious election weekend violence in March 2019 that damaged the credibility of security services,

Situation Room calls on INEC and the security services to also pay particular attention to the following:

- Ensuring that security measures are non-partisan across the States- especially with regard to deployment of officers and preventing armed groups moving at will on election day.
- Having a firm and consistent stance on the use of the card reader and electoral standards
- Respond clearly and without delay where election materials are hijacked and diverted.

Situation Room calls on INEC to defend its electoral standards and not to succumb to external pressure in favour of contrived results that will damage confidence in our elections locally and nationally. In all instances violence should not be rewarded.

We particularly call on the security services to ensure that the collation of election results is protected from partisan abuse and that INEC officials are able to complete this task transparently in the presence of agents and observers. We give particular importance to this given past instances of election officials being forced to write results under duress in recent elections.

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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, CITAD, 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) Stakeholders Democracy Network, Human Rights Monitor, Reclaim Naija,

Nigerian Women Trust Fund, Alliance for Credible Elections (ACE), CISLAC, and several other CSOs numbering more than seventy.

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