

ELECTION SECURITY THREAT ASSESSMENT: TOWARDS 2015 ELECTIONS

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Background and Political Context

The Nigeria 2015 General Elections initially scheduled to hold on 14th and 28th February were on Saturday 7th February 2015 rescheduled by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). The elections will now hold on 28th March (Presidential and National Assembly) and on April 11 (Gubernatorial and State Assembly). In announcing the re-schedule, INEC cited insecurity and the consequent renewed offensive against the Boko Haram by security services. Although the levels of insecurity in Nigeria had been high, it was the non-availability of the military to provide support to INEC and to the police in the conduct of the elections that ultimately led to the six-week delay of the elections. While this is not the first time elections are being shifted by INEC, many Nigerians were wary not only because the nation is perhaps witnessing the keenest electoral contest since her return to democracy in 1999 but also because of the post-election violence following the 2011 presidential polls.

Since the announcement of the re-schedule of the polls, a lot has happened in the political terrain in terms of elections preparedness. In a bid to pre-test the card readers ahead the general elections, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) conducted field tests in 225 Polling Units and 358 voting centres across 12 states drawn from the 6 geo-political zones on Saturday, 7th March, 2015. The locations for the card reader demonstrations were Aguata (Anambra), Jama'are (Bauchi), Oshimili (Delta), Abakaliki (Ebonyi), Ado-Ekiti (Ekiti), Ikeja (Lagos), Kumbotso (Kano), Bunza (Kebbi), Kokona (Nasarawa), Shiroro (Niger), Port Harcourt City (Rivers) and Gasso (Taraba). Meanwhile, INEC is repeating the exercise in two states of the federation.

While the exercise was conducted in a largely orderly and peaceful manner across the states, some challenges were recorded. For example, in Kano State, the machines failed to read the finger-prints of many prospective voters. In Anambra state, there were severe challenges with the battery power of the card readers and their ability to read finger prints. Some Abuja residents described the card reader as a fraud due to its inability to read their finger prints which could lead to their disfranchisement. The aggrieved residents therefore demonstrated against their use in the forth-coming elections at the INEC headquarters, Abuja recently. In Ekiti state, some voters were initially scared to come out because of allegations of being arrested if the Card Reader could not verify their PVCs. There were several reports of challenges and delays in the authentication of fingerprints and people were asked to fill incident forms. The two leading political parties are disagreeing on the outcome of the testing; while PDP insists that the exercise has vindicated their outcry against its use during the election, APC national women leader Mrs. Ramatu Aliyu claimed the exercise was very successful and expressed the party's support for its use during the forthcoming elections.

A Federal High Court sitting in Abuja has ordered the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to include the Young Democratic Party (YDP) in the list of its duly registered political parties. Justice Ahmed Muhammed held that YDP was deemed registered when INEC failed to inform the then political association of its decision not to register it as a political party within 30 days of receiving its application, as required under Section 78 (4) of the Electoral Act, 2010. INEC was said to have received the association's application on April 1, 2014 but only notified the applicant of its decision not to register it on September 15, 2014.

This tenth edition of the CLEEN Foundation Security Threat Assessment analyses key trends that could pose threat ahead the rescheduled elections to coming up on March 28 and April 11. The STA provides an analysis of key happenings in the country in the run up to the March and April general elections in Nigeria. Although the report is designed to provide updates of trends recorded in February 2015, as much as possible, effort was made to provide updates of key trends up to 15th March 2015. The report provides updates on the following five indicator areas: Distribution of Permanent Voters' Cards (PVC); Campaign Hate Speech and Acts of Violence; Response to Identified Threats to Election by Security Agencies; Protection of the Franchise of Internally Displaced Persons; Emergence of Alternate Security Arrangements.

Distribution of Permanent Voters' Cards (PVC)

The ongoing distribution of Permanent Voters' Card (PVCs) remains a major factor for both the credibility of the electoral process and its outcome. This, in turn, would to a large extent heighten tensions across the country. In February, the country witnessed tremendous increase in the collection of PVCs in readiness for the elections. In the North East, a high rate of collection of PVCs was recorded, distribution of PVCs in the region was observed despite the region's security challenges. The highest rate of collection (95%) was in Gombe while the lowest collection rate (73%) was in Borno State. The lower figures in Borno is understood to be due to technical difficulties encountered in the production of the PVCs in Abuja. In particular, the unavailability of PVCs for Maisandari Ward of Maiduguri Metropolitan has made the electorate quite uneasy. Maisandari Ward is reputed to be the largest political ward in the state whose votes have always been a significant deciding factor for electoral victory at both LGA and state levels. Nevertheless, INEC has promised completion of the distribution of PVCs for Maisandari in March.

Table 1: Distribution of Permanent Voters' Cards in Nigeria as at March 12, 2015

S/ N	States	Number of Registered Voters	Number of Cards Collected by Voters	Percentage of Collection
1	Abia	1,396,162	1,177,520	84.34
2	Adamawa	1,559,012	1,381,571	88.62
3	Akwa-Ibom	1,680,759	1,587,566	94.46
4	Anambra	1,963,173	1,658,967	84.50
5	Bauchi	2,054,125	1,778,380	86.58
6	Bayelsa	610,373	546,372	89.51
7	Benue	2,015,452	1,607,800	79.77
8	Borno	1,934,079	1,407,777	72.79
9	Cross River	1,175,623	963,929	81.99
10	Delta	2,275,264	1,921,627	84.46
11	Ebonyi	1,074,273	848,392	78.97
12	Edo	1,779,738	1,218,734	68.48
13	Ekiti	732,021	511,790	69.91
14	Enugu	1,429,221	1,223,606	85.61

15	FCT	881,472	569,109	64.56
16	Gombe	1,120,023	1,069,635	95.50
17	Imo	1,803,030	1,707,449	94.70
18	Jigawa	1,831,276	1,756,320	95.91
19	Kaduna	3,407,222	3,174,519	93.17
20	Kano	4,975,701	4,112,039	82.64
21	Katsina	2,827,943	2,620,096	92.65
22	Kebbi	1,470,648	1,372,630	93.34
23	Kogi	1,350,883	926,013	68.55
24	Kwara	1,142,267	884,996	77.48
25	Lagos	5,822,207	3,767,647	64.71
26	Nasarawa	1,242,667	1,048,053	84.34
27	Niger	2,014,317	1,682,058	83.51
28	Ogun	1,829,534	904,647	49.45
29	Ondo	1,524,655	1,110,844	72.86
30	Osun	1,407,107	1,030,051	73.20
31	Oyo	2,415,566	1,639,967	67.89

32	Plateau	2,001,825	1,508,585	75.36
33	Rivers	2,537,590	2,127,837	83.85
34	Sokoto	1,611,929	1,527,004	94.73
35	Taraba	1,340,652	1,270,889	94.80
36	Yobe	1,099,970	824,401	74.95
37	Zamfara	1,495,717	1,435,452	95.97
	Total	68,833,476	55,904,272	81.22

Source: Independent National Electoral Commission, 2015

While the increase in the rate of collection of PVCs is heart-warming, this success may not automatically translate to a corresponding figures of voter turnout not only because voter apathy is characteristic of recent elections in Nigeria, but also because many voters may have already been disenfranchised through loss of their PVC to unscrupulous politicians who use a variety of methods, including outright purchase of PVCs and tricks to dispossess card carriers.

In Taraba State, voters in many local communities were lured into giving out their PVCs in anticipation of either securing employment opportunities with the Federal Government or bank loans with the PVCs allegedly serving as collaterals. In other communities, PVCs have been reported to be collected at gunpoint from households suspected to be members of the opposition APC in the state. In the neighbouring Adamawa State, some youths allegedly posing as INEC officials retrieved PVCs from individuals for ‘rectification of problems’ associated with the cards and then disappeared with them. While INEC has announced that PVCs cannot be used by persons other than those

whose identity is captured in the card, it was gathered that some persons are dispossessing people of their PVCs if they are thought likely to vote for a competing party. Even if the cards cannot be used by those who acquire them, the original owner would have been disenfranchised.

In the South West region, the Ogun State Resident Electoral Commissioner, recently reported that 555 PVCs belonging to deceased people were discovered in the state after the commission displayed the names of those that were yet to collect their PVCs. As at the time of writing this report, about 400,000 PVCs meant for Lagos State is still being expected in the state.

The table above showed that Ogun State has the lowest collection rate and this has generated a raging controversy in Ogun State with Governor Ibikunle Amosun raising alarm over 600,000 alien cards allegedly brought to the state; however, the Administrative Secretary of INEC in Ogun State, admitted that some cards meant for Edo State were brought to Ogun, but they were not fake or alien.

Three critical issues have emerged on PVCs in the South West. One is that some unscrupulous ad-hoc staff were allegedly collecting bribes before giving PVCs to their owners. In other instances, some INEC ad-hoc workers at various collection centres have allegedly been acting against one of the commission's laid down rules which forbids the collection of PVCs by proxy yet in some cases, voters allegedly bribed INEC ad-hoc workers to collect the PVCs on behalf of their brothers, sisters or friends. Secondly, some of the PVCs were stolen at Ajeromi/Ifelodun Local Government Area of Lagos State; however, the about 1,000 stolen cards were returned at a sensitisation programme in the LGA when the thieves realized that they will not be able to use them during the elections. Thirdly, there have been allegations that some politicians are going round to buy PVCs from eligible voters. According to a February 10 press statement by the National Publicity

Secretary of the All Progressives Congress, “PDP agents have been operating in all villages between Kobape and Orile-Imo along the Sagamu-Abeokuta Expressway in Ogun State, giving N10,000 to each poor villager and collecting their PVCs. The PDP agents are also promising each villager a monthly stipend of N10, 000 if and when their party assumes office in the state. Indications are that this objectionable PVC mop-up is being replicated in all opposition strongholds by the frenzied PDP, hence we at the APC have decided to alert the nation to the reprehensible act.”

The distribution of PVC in the states of the South East has been going well with highest collection rates in Abia and the lowest in Ebonyi state. There is still significant number of voters that are yet to collect their PVCs, many of whom have complained of delays on the part of INEC in making these PVCs available for them to collect from the designated places. For instance, many Onitsha residents are yet to get their PVCs even though INEC claims they are available. It is not because of their unwillingness to collect but because the cards were not at the locations they have been asked to go and collect them. In the South-East generally, PVC-buying is gaining grounds and people are wondering the reasons behind this, as they are believed to be privy to some sinister agenda against the use of the card readers for the elections. So we might end up in a scenario where there would not be enough time to use the technology and it would be jettisoned and the elections would be conducted as previous ones.

In the North Central region, apprehensions that a considerable numbers of Nigerians might be disenfranchised as a result of the inability of INEC to effectively distribute the PVCs to all registered voters remain a major challenge. In Plateau State for instance, Governor Jonah Jang has dragged the INEC to court on behalf of himself and several citizens of the state that

are yet to be given their PVCs. This is viewed more as a deliberate attempt by INEC to disenfranchise these eligible voters.

In the North West, the distribution of PVC has been very challenging in the zone, especially in Kano and Kaduna state. The level of distribution and collections as at December was very low as at December 2014. This was reflected in our previous reports. Since January there has been massive improvement in distribution and collection. The zonal distribution average is about 93%, which is one of the best in the country.

With the increasing opposition to the use of PVC and Card Readers by the ruling party (PDP) and its allies, the INEC organised a mock election in 225 polling units and 358 points in 12 states including some polling units in the northwest. The test run, though had a few challenges, it was generally satisfactory. This has increased people's confidence in the use of PVC and the Card Readers.

Campaign Hate Speech and Acts of Violence

Political parties, especially the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressives Congress (APC) seem to have reached their climax level in terms of campaigns and strategies to win elections across the country. Many of these campaigns and strategies are thought to be unethical and violates the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) and National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) Codes guiding political campaigns. There have also been reports of hate speeches by aspirants publicly.

The "Pre-election Report and Advisory on Violence in Nigeria's 2015 General Elections" by the National Human Rights Commission documented 58 politically motivated killings in Nigeria in 2015. The Commission also confirmed 61 incidences of election violence with the majority of the cases recorded in Kaduna, Lagos and Rivers which are "three key economic and

politically significant state”. The violence ahead of the elections is alarming and the Commission calls on politicians to eschew violence.

Hate speech is common among the politicians and supporters of key political parties (PDP and APC) and indeed the general public. In Borno State, North East, Nigeria, reference is often made for instance, to the former governor of Borno State, Ali Sheriff (now a member of PDP) as the architect of the current security crisis by APC supporters who label the PDP and all their supporters as *Boko Haram*. This label is however replaced by the term ‘Abuja-based politicians’ during campaigns by aspirants to refer to the PDP. Sheriff’s close association with the presidency has been interpreted by some Muslims as the case of a Muslim working for a Christian president to reduce Muslim population at all cost hence the religiously motivated hate speeches. While it is difficult to find a linear relationship between violence and hate speech within the period covered in this report, two incidents from Borno State stand out very clear to demonstrate how campaigns and possibly notions of others are likely to threaten security in the forthcoming elections. The visit by APC’s presidential candidate, General Buhari to Maiduguri on February 9 led to clashes between two rival youth groups – PDP and APC. The clash allegedly resulted in the burning of the popular UTC campaign office of the PDP in Maiduguri by APC supporters. PDP youths were later to retaliate in an alleged attack on Governor Shettima’s convoy a week later exactly at the same spot of the previous clash. Both the PDP and APC later held press conferences to point accusing fingers at each other. It is feared that such actions may be repeated during elections.

Hate speech is very prominent in Ebonyi compared to other states in the South-East. Both the Governor and the Deputy Governor have gone full-speed in granting press conferences in which they have continued to accuse each other of one thing or the other. Some political actors interviewed were

of the view that, presently, in a free and fair election, Labour Party could win the election given that the Governor had backed them after having been schemed out during the PDP gubernatorial primaries. This has not gone down well with the Deputy Governor and PDP candidate as he has intensified efforts to ensure that he wins the elections. With the heightened tension surrounding the allegedly planned impeachment of the Governor, the likelihood of violence is high in the State.

There is serious campaign of calumny in Imo State as the campaign offices of the major political parties in the state, PDP and APC, have been engaging in serious tongue-lashing of each other in equal measures, and the voters have taken the sides. It is happening both in print and social media, with no holds barred. It is only the APGA candidate, Captain Iheanacho that is thought to have faced his campaign with maturity, but then he is being seen as a major threat by the ruling party which has now allegedly resorted to pulling down his campaign billboards even after he has paid his advertisement fees.

The Ekiti State Governor, Peter Ayodele Fayose has been at the forefront of campaign of calumny against All Progressives Congress presidential flag bearer, Major General Muhammadu Buhari (Retired) in the south West region. In a recent newspaper advert, Fayose warned Nigerians against voting for a 72-year-old man claiming that since three ex-leaders from the North-West had died in office, it would not be wise for Nigerians to vote for Buhari “because we are tired of state burials.” Fayose also alleged that Buhari’s recent visit to London was to attend to his health while telling Nigerians that he went on a working visit. According to him, “As against the claim of the APC that Buhari was on a short working visit to the UK, Buhari is being treated at a hospital” in London – this claim has been debunked by APC. Fayose equally predicted that Buhari will never be president. He was quoted as saying, “I wish they can see spiritually what I am talking about that Buhari,

despite the hullabaloo, will never be president. I predicted my return as Ekiti State governor and I am saying it again that Buhari will never rule Nigeria again”. Fayose also was among those calling for the sack of the INEC Chairman, Prof. Attahiru Jega. He was quoted as saying, “President Goodluck Jonathan can sack Jega if he wishes and if he does, heavens will not fall”.

In Lagos, opposition elements also alleged that the All Progressives Congress governorship candidate, Mr. Akinwumi Ambode is insane. In a statement the Eko Liberation Movement, said “a faceless group is trying to procure a fake medical report like they did to the Presidential candidate of the APC, General Muhammadu Buhari that he had prostate cancer. Their latest antics is to claim that Ambode had suffered a strange mental illness”

The prevalence of hate speeches in the election campaigns made the APC to call for sanctions against erring political parties and candidates. According to the APC Presidential Campaign Organisation, “The NBC has soon forgotten the role it played through its inaction against some TV Stations when they aired a dirty and false documentary on General Muhammadu Buhari, presidential candidate of the APC. The specific code that these TV stations have contravened is Section 3.1.2 of the NBC Code, which states that ‘materials/statements likely to incite or encourage the commission of a crime or lead to public disorder shall not be broadcast’. This is a breach, which attracts severe penalty of suspension of license or outright withdrawal of the license of that station, but to the surprise of many industry observers and Nigerians, to date, nothing has been done to the errant stations. On the other hand, it was the court rather than NBC that ordered the AIT television network not to air its documentary thought to be against the Vice Presidential candidate of the APC.

In Plateau and Niger States, North Central, Nigeria there has been reported cases of the burning and vandalisation of campaign vehicles and billboards, in Nasarawa State, the campaign office of the PDP was reportedly burnt down by suspected political thugs. As it is, politicians are appropriating the language of hate in selling their candidature, which in turn has led to tensed political atmosphere across the states of the zone. In the words of a respondent in Benue State, “we are witnessing a war like situation due to the way and manner politicians are running their campaigns. This is not peculiar to any political party because they are all the same”. Nigerians are becoming afraid that since everyone believes he or she must win the election, violence is likely to occur if not handled very well by INEC and the security agencies.

In Niger state, the defection of the deputy Governor, Ahmed Ibeto to the APC has created a deep rift with Governor Babangida Aliyu of the PDP. Allegations by the APC that the governor refused to allow the deputy governor attend the State Executive Council meeting because of his defection to the opposition, coupled with a directive that the deputy governor should leave the Government House to another location because his office will be renovated has also created anxiety in the polity. This is capable of creating tensions if not properly monitored.

The North West is replete with examples of hate and dangerous speeches by politicians at all levels. Since the end of primary elections, there are increasing use of dangerous and hate speeches by politicians in both the conventional and social media. The social media and conventional ones are all awash with hate, mudslinging and ethnic and religion based mobilization. Examples of these include statements credited to the Vice President on religion during the PDP Presidential Campaign stop at Jigawa, where he reportedly alleged that APC will Christianize Nigeria, because the vice Presidential candidate is Pastor of a big Church with more than 5000 Churches. Earlier, governors of Jigawa,

Katsina and Kaduna state were alleged to have made statements that are capable of inciting violence. There are also lower level public statements and rumours that are hateful and dangerous. Most of them are hardly reported in the media. The level of intimidation of supporters across the major political parties is very high particularly in Kano, Katsina, Kaduna and Sokoto state. Posters and billboards of opposing parties are violently removed in areas of advantage.

Response to Identified Threats to Election by Security Agencies

The crisis in the North East was the most important reason given in support of the re-scheduling of the polls from February to March and April by INEC. Since the announcement of the re-schedule on February 7, there have been remarkable successes achieved by the military towards recovering areas previously captured by Boko Haram in the three states under emergency rule. Within the period covered by this report, key towns and LGAs formerly captured by Boko Haram have been recovered by Nigerian military in conjunction with military assistance from Chad, Cameroun and Niger. While the recaptured communities are still far from being safe for the conduct of elections, there is a general atmosphere of confidence and safety within the region, and that the elections would hold as scheduled.

The security concerns in the North East go beyond recapturing of lost grounds from Boko Haram. There are other forms of threats to elections especially the sporadic suicide attacks being recorded in public places within the region which the security agencies are less able to prevent. There have been some efforts from other non-state actors in the security scene such as the Civilian JTF to help forestall suicide attacks but like the police and military, it is equally less equipped to handle this problem. Similar to the Boko Haram conflict, ethno-religious crises that has bedeviled southern

Taraba involving Tiv/Jukun/Hausa-Fulani appears to have been infrequent lately, at least within the period covered by this report even though the tendency to escalate especially during elections may not be completely downplayed.

In the South South especially in Rivers State, activities of political thugs and cultists, deployed by politicians in the form of gun attacks, kidnapping and killings remain a threat to the elections, for which security agencies have to respond proactively to prevent escalations during the polls. For example, Rivers' PDP governorship campaign team was attacked by gun-carrying cultists in Abuja in January. On 17 February, gunmen opened fire on APC members at a governorship campaign rally in Okrika. Earlier in January, members of the APC travelling in a bus from Ogoni to Port Harcourt for a campaign rally were attacked by unknown gunmen. Governor Rotimi Amaechi's aide, Freddy Ndigbara was kidnapped recently by unknown gunmen in Kaani community of Khana Local Government Area during a campaign rally. In the Ogba/Egbama/Ndoni axis, no less than twenty persons were said to have been killed since November in politically motivated inter-cult attacks.

Meanwhile, the state police command has consistently re-assured residents of protection and vowed to investigate and bring culprits to justice. In some instances, such as the activities of cultists in Ogba/Egbama, soldiers were recently deployed to fish out members of various cult groups involved in the violence. In the case of the Okrika attack, the police, has been reportedly said to be investigating the matter. The leadership of the APC has continued to accuse the police of not doing enough to protect its members from these attacks. The PDP has equally continued to deny any involvement of any of the attacks.

Security agents have not been successful in preventing pre-election violence in the South West. Lagos and Oyo State have recorded some deaths during the reporting period while Ekiti and Ogun State have also recorded some electoral violence. Four instances, hoodlums, suspected to be political thugs, allegedly killed three persons in separate clashes in the Ajegunle and Lagos Island areas of Lagos. Also in Lagos, buses and properties were destroyed in a scuffle linked to motor-park unions in Oshodi. In Ibadan, capital of Oyo State, suspected political thugs murdered two supporters of Accord Party at Odinjo area of the state. 15 others sustained serious injuries in the incident which took place on Sunday, March 1, 2014. It was reported that during a meeting organised by Accord Party's House of Representatives candidate, Gbenga Adewusi, in Ibadan, thugs allegedly attacked the party supporters.

In Ekiti State, suspected political thugs armed with guns and machetes on Thursday, February 12, unleashed terror and destroyed properties in Igbemo-Ekiti in Irepodun/Ifelodun Local Government Area, Ijan-Ekiti and Iluomoba-Ekiti both in Gbonyin Local Government Area. The hoodlums reportedly attacked the residence of a member of the House of Assembly, Ayodeji Odu and the APC Publicity Secretary, Taiwo Olatubosun both in Igbemo. Four APC members were said to have been abducted and posters and billboards of APC candidates allegedly vandalised by the hoodlums.

In Ogun State, billboards and posters of the PDP governorship candidate, Gboyega Nasiru Isiaka popularly known as GNI in Abeokuta metropolis were said to have been vandalized by unknown persons. The destruction and defacing of posters and billboards in major towns in Ogun allegedly assumed a different dimension as some aides of Gboyega Isiaka, were said to be sleeping at the sites where the campaign billboards were hoisted in Abeokuta. It was also reported that the campaign of Governor Ibikunle Amosun of Ogun State turned bloody during his visit to Remo North Local Council

when the supporters of the APC and the PDP clashed leaving some people injured. The clash also led to the destruction of some vehicles, shops and billboards of the PDP House of Representatives candidate for Remo Federal Constituency, Hon. Oladipupo Adebutu.

Meanwhile, there were some reports of alleged clampdowns on opposition elements. The APC, in a statement by the Lagos State Publicity Secretary, Chief Joe Igbokwe, said armed and well-kitted soldiers were stationed at the gate of APC chieftain and former governor of Lagos State, Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu's residence. Likewise, in a February 12, 2015 press statement the All Progressives Congress said the Federal Government's security agencies have bugged the mobile phones of a former Governor of Lagos State, Bola Tinubu, Governor Rotimi Amaechi of Rivers State, Senator Bukola Saraki the National Chairman of APC, Chief John Odigie-Oyegun and its National Publicity Secretary, Alhaji Lai Mohammed.

There minimal threats to the elections identified by security agencies in Abia, Enugu and Imo States going towards the elections in March and April. Although a faction of Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) has continuously stated that they would not allow the elections to hold, this is seen as mere ranting because there is no cohesion in the opposition to the elections. There is no major alternate security arrangement in Anambra except that parties have continuously mobilized members to be vigilant and ensure that their votes count.

Ebonyi State had been noted for cultism in the past but concerted efforts by the police and military appear to have brought the problem for some time. Now, however, cultism appear to be staging a come-back in the state with the attendant violence. Apart from pulling down bill-boards of various parties, there have been cases of murders of political actors in the State. As

thugs have continued to molest and commit arson, as the one at the State House of Assembly in February, the threat of violent conflict during the elections is a high risk in Ebonyi State.

In the North Central, security agencies were drafted to provide security at the Niger State House of Assembly in order to avert the likelihood of a breakdown of law and order due to the defection of two law makers from the PDP to the APC, and the subsequent declaration of their seats vacant by the Speaker of the House of Assembly.

Across states within the zone, consultative meetings are been organized by the security agencies in concert with other stakeholders on the need to eschew violence before, during and after the election. This is part of the wider activities of the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) which is a platform for INEC and security agencies to share ideas on how to contain acts that are capable of degenerating into violence. These consultations are important; according to one respondent:

After the burning of the campaign vehicle of the PDP in Suleja, the Commissioner of Police of Niger State sent a team of security agents to our area for further investigation. Subsequently, he convened a meeting with stakeholders and appealed to people not to take the laws into their hands. Above all, the security agents are going to monitor and arrest any person or group that is out to foment violence.

In Benue, Nasarawa and Plateau states, the inability of both the security agencies and judiciary to prosecute perpetrators of violence such as communal violence, criminality associated with cattle rustling, farmers and pastoralists conflicts as well as militia groups such as Ombatse raises serious public concern about the capacity and commitment of the State to protect its

citizens and dispense justice. There are several victims of violence that are still awaiting justice and the elections only reignite the concerns of these victims.

In the North West, the security agencies have done relatively well in managing interparty relations by ensuring commitment to peaceful campaign and electioneering process, but they have not been able to manage the level of violence and intimidation in the zone. In all the states, the Commissioners of Police have encouraged and coordinated the leading parties and candidates to sign-on to a commitment or MoU on peaceful elections. Despite this effort, there are still increasing cases of political skirmishes and violence. Even when arrests are made the politicians have always found their ways in securing the release of their political thugs.

Katsina, Kano Kaduna and Zamfara state have continued to experience different forms of political violence. There reported attack on party and campaign offices of the posing parties in Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina and Sokoto. In almost all the 7 states there are reported destruction of campaign billboards and removal of posters. There were also brawls between the supporters of both parties in Katsina, Kano, Kaduna and Sokoto.

Very recently, four persons were killed in a clash between political thugs suspected to be members of the rival PDP and APC in Warawa LGA Kano State. They clashed shortly after the governorship candidate of the PDP, Mallam Salihu Sagir Takai, campaigned in the area. The violence caused a huge panic in Ladin Makole village.

Protection of the Franchise of Internally Displaced Persons

Consequent upon the tense security atmosphere especially following Boko Haram's successive attacks on several communities in the last six months, some records estimate that over two million people may have been displaced

from their homes in the North East. This has created enormous difficulties for INEC in ensuring that Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are not disenfranchised. Following intense pressures from civil society organisations and political parties, INEC opened registration centres for the internally displaced persons living in all officially designated camps within the region. In furtherance of this mission, apart from INEC's statutory role in mobilising for the registration, much greater emphasis was also noticed among politicians who took advantage of the registration opportunities to ensure that eligible IDPs were registered. IDPs were issued handouts by politicians in the affected states which led to a remarkable success towards their mobilization for the registration exercise as the camps became the foci of political activities.

The efforts of the politicians were however seen by many observers as typically self-serving and represented mere strategies for canvassing cheap votes from people in distress. It is likely that the politicians see the IDP camps as likely proxies for voting centres in the absence of security in IDPs' home communities that would ensure voting. If this scenario were to hold, the greatest advantage would then accrue to politicians in Borno State which is having the highest number of officially registered IDP camps followed by Adamawa and Gombe states. There is also the suggestion that Yobe State which was initially hesitant about establishing official camps has lately contemplated establishing IDP camps probably in realization of such benefits.

Within the North Central, the condition of IDPs remains a very serious one across the zone, especially in Plateau, Nasarawa and Benue states that have witnessed various forms of violence-induced displacements. Also, the displaced persons from Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states are currently in states like Plateau. While there has been call for INEC to ensure these

categories of persons are not disenfranchised, the dearth of reliable data about their number, status and locations constitutes a major challenge for both the elections and security in general. As pointed out by an IDP resident in Plateau State:

I am from Adamawa State. I came into Plateau State with my family as a result of the attack on our community by members of Boko Haram. The government does not [record] the number of people that have entered this state because we are scattered in Churches, camps, and some are with family members and friends. Also, some have rented places that they are currently residing. Though, most of us are registered, we are in this state without our PVCs. If nothing is done, we will be denied our right to vote here and in our state, since we cannot go back there now.

In the South South, some internally displaced persons have already relocated from places like Omoku, where several political killings have occurred in recent times to relatively safer communities because of the killings due to cult activities; however, there are is no detailed available data on the issue. There are many displaced persons from the North East in the some parts of the region, especially in Rivers State. They are visible in the city of Port Harcourt, but less so in Cross Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa and Delta States. There are no specific threats posed to security and elections traceable to their presence, other than the general sense of insecurity being suffered as a result of the high risk of violence. It was however observed that many of them went back to their home states before 14 February 2015 intending to participate in the expected elections.

Although the heightening political tension remains a major security threat in the North West zone, the security situation is still essentially dominated by cases of Boko Haram insurgency. With the recent routing of Boko Haram in

the north, they may increase their attack on soft targets in Kano, Jigawa and possibly Kaduna. Their threat of disrupting the elections in some parts of country is still credible.

There are currently a lot of displaced people in the region, although only quite a few are staying in refugee camps, a lot are staying with extended families and friends. Those outside officially designated camps may be disenfranchised in the elections. The spate of violence in southern Kaduna has also created a few displaced persons and the protection in the designated camps is not organised and effective. There is still no clarity on how INEC will manage voting for the displaced people.

South West is not directly affected by the insurgency in the North-East and North-West regions. However, though there may not be internally displaced persons camps in the South West, there are many victims of terror who have migrated to the zone and living with family and friends. Unfortunately, the time for transfer of voters register had elapsed as it is less than a month to the polls and INEC had said that only those living in IDP camps are being considered to vote at their refugee camps.

In the South Eastern states, there is no visible presence of IDPs and so there are no concerns of possible disenfranchisement arising from displacement. The same applies to Ebonyi state even without the resolution of the Ezza-Ezillo crisis.

Emergence of Alternate Security Arrangements

The security challenges in the North East has over the years been so daunting that conventional security outfits alone have not been able to contain it. This has necessitated the emergence of alternative security outfits to complement the conventional forces. Two such youth vigilantes groups immediately come to mind –the Civilian JTF in Borno State and hunters’

groups who turned into vigilantes in Adamawa State. Both groups have made tremendous efforts towards the fight against Boko Haram however, some challenges have been observed in the *modus operandi* notably the near absence of an effective command control structure; the lack of a clearly defined membership render the two groups problematic; and the absence of regulative code of ethics and guidelines regulating their activities has led to frequent complaints about their alleged abuse of human rights.

When viewed in the light of these shortcomings, the existence of these security apparatuses have been questioned especially in their possible alignment with certain political forces to gain electoral victory. For instance, it is on record that Borno State government is funding and kitting the Civilian JTF from its inception; the group has been spotted severally in the campaign rallies held by the ruling APC in the state. In Adamawa State, local hunters who have fought off the Boko Haram many times may have been supported by both the ruling PDP and the opposition APC especially through assistance received from former Vice President Atiku Abubakar. In both instances, it is almost impossible that these groups would be non-partisan during elections especially the March 28 and April 11 polls that are likely to be contested very keenly. As a result of the rising wave of violence ahead of the March 28 and April 11 general elections, politicians across the country have resorted to the use of non-conventional security organs such as ex-militants and vigilante groups in the south west.

Vigilantism represents a part of everyday security arrangements in all states that make up the North Central. Most communities both in urban and rural areas have established one form of community vigilante framework outside the control of the formal state security. Many of these non-formal entities are controlled and funded by the state. With increased deficiencies in the ability of the formal security sector to provide the much needed security,

communities are forced to resort to these home-grown self-help measures. One respondent explained that

My people can now sleep with their eyes closed as a result of the vigilante we established. These vigilantes are members of the community and there are volunteers who understand the community more than the Police or Civil Defence (Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps). They don't collect bribes or delay in prosecuting criminals. We trust them so much.

Across all South East states, there is no major alternate security arrangement except that parties have continuously mobilized members to be vigilant and ensure that their votes count.

In the North East, with the increasing cases of violence, especially in Zamfara, Kaduna and Katsina states, several community vigilante groups have been established. The Zamfara State government recently recruited 4,540 security guards ostensibly in response to the security challenges in the state. The Kano state government had made similar recruitment in 2014. In Kano, Kaduna, Katsina with history of youth militancy, particularly the yan'daba, electoral politics is always an opportunity to perpetrate violence on behalf of their principals.

The cases of raids and mass killings by bandits in southern Kaduna are also attracting non state security response from the communities. Many politicians have recruited thugs and bouncers for self-protection against violent intimidation from the opposing side.

In the South West, the militant group, the Oodua Peoples' Congress (OPC) which has hitherto been silent has re-emerged as a key political actor in the region. The recent alleged endorsement of the candidacy of President

Goodluck Jonathan and the promise of six million votes to the President from the South West. Additionally, the visit to the President in Lagos by Gani Adams, a leader of the group is a key indicator of the resurgence of the OPC. On the other hand, the OPC is said to be implementing a multi-billion Naira contract to guard pipelines and other security infrastructure in South West Nigeria. The security contract said to be employing 40,000 youths is thought to be covert mobilization of votes. The founder of the OPC, Dr. Fredrick Faseun has warned that if Nigerians failed to re-elect President Jonathan, they will regret it. He further warned that in the South West, “any contestant with him [President Jonathan] will lose his deposit”. In addition, on Monday 16th March, the OPC also organized a protest rally in Lagos demanding the removal of Attahiru Jega from the chairmanship of INEC. The 2015 general election has heightened the political relevance of hitherto silent groups such as MASSOB, OPC and the ex-militants in the Niger-Delta.

In the South South, despite the amnesty program and the efforts to reintegrate the former militants, the label of “ex-militant” has remained very prominent in Nigerian political terrain. Some of the ex-militants have allegedly transformed into security contractors with “General Tompolo” allegedly procuring refurbished war-ships. These developments are coming at the heels of reports which suggest that piracy is on the rise in the Gulf of Guinea ahead of the general elections in Nigeria. On the political scene, ex-militants have remained very vocal and visible on the political scene. In Bayelsa state, they have clashed with security agents leaving one person dead and others injured. The protest was allegedly over Governor Dickson's reported plan to hijack the multimillion oil pipeline surveillance contract earmarked by the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) for oil bearing communities in the state. On the other hand, while some ex-militants, including the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta

(MEND) had endorsed the APC and its candidate, General Buhari, other groups have endorsed the PDP and its candidate, President Jonathan. The eventual outcome of the elections is likely to disappoint at least one of the militants' camps and their reaction to the outcome of the elections is a key risk factor in the election.

A further dimension of the role of these non-state actors is the alleged secret meeting between "General Boyloaf" a leader of MEND and Gani Adams of the OPC. It was reported that this secret meeting resolved that "both groups will work together in the event of any premeditated violence against the South-South and South-West" during the general election. While both MEND and OPC present significant security risks in the South South and the South West respectively, collaborations between them could generate tensions and possibly trigger violent conflict in both zones comprising 12 states.

Violent Hotspots

- **RED: NC – Benue, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau; NE – Adamawa, Borno, Yobe, Taraba, Bauchi, Gombe, NW – Kaduna, Kano and Katsina SS – Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta; SW – Lagos, Ekiti and Oyo SE – Abia, Ebonyi**
- **AMBER: NC – Kogi, and Kwara; NW – Zamfara, Sokoto, SE – Imo and Anambra; SW – Ogun**
- **GREEN: NW- Jigawa and Kebbi, SW – Ondo and Osun; SE – Enugu SS- Edo, Cross River and Akwa Ibom; NC Federal Capital Territory, Abuja**

Regional Analysis

The fierce battle currently going on between the insurgent group, Boko Haram and the military is the defining threat to the general elections in the northeast.

North East: Nigerian territory previously seized by Boko Haram in Northern and central Borno as well as northern Adamawa and southern Yobe have been reclaimed by the military, these areas are far from being safe for the conduct of elections. If anything, the presence of Chadian and Nigerien troops along the border communities in Borno is likely to make room for a more fierce battle with Boko Haram as the group has proclaimed allegiance to the Islamic State (ISIS) and ISIS has reportedly accepted this allegiance. This move could have been strategically made to increase Boko Haram's capability for terror. Despite all the efforts at containing the situation lately, Boko Haram has demonstrated its willingness to carry out its threat to stop the elections during its February attack on Gombe when it distributed leaflets containing messages warning people not to come out for elections. The increasing number of suicide attacks almost occurring serially in Maiduguri (Borno State) and Potiskum (Yobe State) in the last few weeks is seen in this light.

South East: In Obingwa LGA of Abia state the hometown of Abaribe they and would want to defend PDP in their stronghold given the serious threat from APGA. The APGA senatorial candidate Chris Nkwonta and Adolphus Wabara are from Ukwu East LGA; there could be a showdown there. Ugwunagbo LGA is a stronghold of APGA and the current Deputy Governor is from there and he is accused of not doing anything for his people. The PDP Deputy Governorship candidate is from Ohafia LGA and is the current speaker and APGA's Otti has dual citizenship from there. APGA's Reagan Ufomba is from Isiala Ngwa LGA and APGA will want to

make a point in Ufomba's homestead and will not tolerate competition from other parties there.

The only place with the signs of violence is Anambra Central Senatorial District where the Uba family is still in contention over the rightful candidate. The LGAs there are: Anaocha, Dunukofia, Njikoka, Idemili South, Idemili North, Awka North and Awka South. There is a likelihood change of loyalty to a rival party just to ensure that the one gets over the other.

The major areas of violent hotspots in Enugu state are Ikwo and Ezza in Ebonyi Central because the Deputy Governorship candidates of PDP and Labour are from there. This is the only place where there have been cases of violence in the run-up to the elections. In Imo state, Aboh Mbaise; Ahiazu Mbaise; Ezinihitte; Ideato North; Ideato South; Nkwerre; Orlu; Owerri Municipal; Owerri North, Owerri West, and Obowo LGA. These are the home LGAs of the major contenders – PDP, APC, and APGA. There may not necessarily be violence as such but the tension will surely be palpable. In Oguta, restive youths from this oil-producing communities have increased tensions in the area.

South South: Although a half of the states in the South-South region fall outside the red colour category in this STA, Rivers State continues to ring the loudest bell when it comes to hotspots for violence as we approach the 2015 elections and all 23 Local Government Areas of the state are hotspots for violence. The tensed atmosphere in the state create fear and instinctive withdrawal or avoidance of participation in the polls for many who believe that the struggle for power between the PDP and APC could escalate into violent conflict. For example, in the first week of March, members of both parties fought at Odesam community in Ahoada East which resulted in the

death of a youth. It was a fight engineered by politicians from both parties over the village during the elections. In a similar vein, Obio/Akpor, Abua/Odual, Okrika, Emohua, Port Harcourt, Etche and Ogba/Egbema local government areas have been on the news media regularly for one form of political violence or the other.

Kidnapping, hate speech and regular attack of political opponents by unknown armed men have hardly been punished. Evidently, the time gained by the re-schedule of the elections could mean that politicians will intensify arrangements for their personal safety while many innocent voters without the resources to equally protect themselves from violence may decide to stay away from polling booths during the elections. Already such informal security arrangement among politicians has long started with cult groups and political thugs. The net result will include massive deployment of violence which can scuttle credible and peaceful elections.

In Bayelsa State, the two main hotspots for violence may be Ogbia and Nembe Local Government Areas. President Goodluck Jonathan hails from Ogbia while former Governor of Bayelsa, Timipre Sylva hails from Nembe – both belong to the same federal constituency which Sylva is seeking to represent as Senator if he wins the elections under the platform of APC. However, the conflict of interest between him and the President is glaring, even in the context of drawn-out legal battles between the federal government and Sylva since he left office and the PDP. In Ogbia (specifically Ayama clan – the home community of President Goodluck Jonathan), fighting broke out recently between those who say that they will vote for the President and not vote for Sylva as Senator and those who say they will vote for the President and vote for Sylva when it comes to the Senatorial seat; broken bottles were used to inflict injuries before the intervention of the police.

Timipre Sylva of the APC is contesting the senatorial seat against media and entertainment tycoon, Ben Murray Bruce of the PDP. Sylva has some ex-militants as supporters who may want to rely on violent strategies to confront the dominant support and following of the PDP if they feel a sense of frustration.

In the case of Cross Rivers State, despite enduring seasons of relatively violent-free political processes since the political party primaries last year, tension has been mounting in some parts of the city of Calabar as well as in Abi and Ugep Local Government Areas. This is due to activities of some dangerous-weapon-carrying youths and supporters of political aspirants. However, this is largely about internal disagreements within the PDP.

There are serious issues in Bomadi Local Government Area of Delta state. First, the unsettled issue of imposition of candidate for the position of chairman of the Local Government Council last November has remained a risk factor for violence. There were many clashes and injuries during party primaries earlier in 2015. Senator James Manager the PDP's Delta State governorship candidate is at loggerheads with Nicholas Mutu – a PDP State House of Assembly candidate under the PDP who does not support the candidature of James Manager as well as other candidates of the PDP. This situation and the activities of their supporters heighten tensions and portend significant risks for electoral violence.

North Central: In Plateau State, there are genuine concerns about the security in Riyom, Barkin Ladi, Langtang South, Wase, Langtang North and Shendam Local Government Areas, largely due to the activities of criminals and bandits that are linked with the rustling of cattle and attack against defenseless persons. The spate of renewed violence in Barkin Ladi Local Government Area of Plateau State raises serious security concerns for the electorate, election officials and the smooth conduct of the elections in

March and April, 2015 respectively. On the other hand, the alleged imposition of PDP Governorship candidate, Senator GNS Pwajok by the out-going Governor Jonah Jang (who is also PDP's candidate for Plateau North Senatorial District, a position currently occupied by Senator Pwajok) in disregard of the party's rotation policy has created some rifts in the state and emboldened the opposition, APC. The ripples from the party primaries are still noticeable in the campaigns and risks further escalation in the general elections especially considering the subsisting ethno-religious tensions in the state.

The prominence of, and prevailing challenge posed by the attack on communities in Benue State by suspected Fulani militiamen, which has led to loss of lives also create tensions ahead of the elections. In recent times, Agatu and Guma LGAs have been worst hit by these acts of criminality. While effort is being made to halt political violence through the signing of peace pact by political parties, there are concerns that the deep divisions between the PDP and APC as expressed in the indiscriminate shooting and violence that characterized a political campaign rally in the state, might lead to renewed fears over the credibility of the elections.

The defection of the deputy governor of Niger state, Ahmed Ibeto from the PDP to the APC, has led to a sour relationship between the deputy governor and the governor, Dr. Muazu Babangida Aliyu. Recent happenings, which has heightened political tensions in the state include: the purported refusal of the governor to allow the deputy governor participate in the State Executive Council under the pretext that he belong to the opposition party; relocation of the office of the deputy governor from the government house to one of the government buildings within the metropolis; rumours that the State House of Assembly was working towards impeaching the deputy governor. These have deepened the division between the PDP and the APC as evident

in the tearing of posters and pulling down of billboards of candidates by suspected supporters of the political parties.

In Kogi and Kwara states, the act of violence perpetrated by suspected thugs has been linked to the vandalisation of campaign vehicle and billboards.

North West: Kano, Katsina, Kaduna and Sokoto should be carefully watched. The complaints of mudslinging, intimation, harassment and dangerous public speeches is very frightening. In Kaduna, the tension between the PDP and APC is very high and has occasionally resulted into violent confrontations and there are different cases of fracas between the supporters of both parties. Concerned by this unhealthy situation, the Kaduna state Commissioner of Police held a three-hour meeting between the two gubernatorial aspirants, Ramalan Yero of PDP and Nasir El-Rufa'i of APC. Kaduna, apart from being a violence prone state, it is a PDP controlled state, with a strong, if not dominant presence of APC; it is also the Vice President's state. Because of the strategic character of the state to northern Nigerian politics, it is a state that both parties are desperate to take.

Southern Kaduna, Kaduna city, Katsina and Kano cities are still possible major flashpoints. The nature of violence may not necessarily be partisan; it could take different dimension including ethnic or religion or insurgency related.

South West: In the South West, residents have been concerned about the slow distribution of PVCs in the region. Politicians in the region have organized many rallies with violence and bloodshed recorded in some of them. Actors in the elections such as the OPC have been visible in the campaigns and in support of the PDP. The votes of the South West is thought to be crucial in deciding the presidential polls hence both parties are working hard to win the minds of the voters. President Jonathan has paid

series of visits to traditional rulers and churches in the region while the APC is critical of this move by the president. The presidential polls is likely to be the most crucial elections in the zone as only the governorship positions in Lagos, Oyo and Ogun are up for contest. The incumbents in Osun, Ekiti and Ondo will however, be seeking to consolidate their hold on the State Assemblies in this polls.

Key Risk Factors

There are key risk factor requiring keen attention and action from security agencies. In some zones that have been prone to violence such as the North West, North Central and the North East, it could take only a small trigger for violence to erupt, especially in Kaduna and Kano state. Some states such as Ebonyi, Benue, Plateau, and Nassarawa have underlying ethno-religious tensions that could be triggered by political wrangling during the elections. In addition to the elections security risk factors emanating from the distribution of permanent voters' cards (PVC), campaign and hate speech, response by security agencies to identified threats to election, protection of the franchise of internally displaced persons, and the emergence of alternate security arrangements discussed above could include.

- I. **Perceived partisanship of security institutions:** There have been recurring allegations of partisan control and use of security institutions in the country. The Police, Military and the DSS have allegedly been deployed and used in a partisan manner by the Federal Government and this could be major threat to security. As we get close to elections, the feeling of political repression and exclusion from the mainstream security cover of the State could be major risk factors. Opposition parties are already reacting to this situation, some state governments have instituted their own security outfits which

could serve as counterforce to the federal security agencies. On the other hand, some groups are vehemently protesting the use of the military for any role in the elections.

- II. **Electoral manipulation and vote rigging:** Vote rigging or perceived rigging will be the major trigger of violence in the region especially the gubernatorial and Presidential elections. INEC has sought to forestall the likelihood of rigging through biometric verification and use of card readers; however, the challenges recorded in the recent field pre-test must urgently be rectified to ensure that the process is efficient and does not result in disenfranchisement as this could be negatively received by prospective voters.
- III. **Boko Haram insurgency:** The military remains active in its campaign against the Boko Haram in the North East. The recent declaration of Adamawa State to be free from insurgents is gladdening, however, it is doubtful that such a declaration would be made about Borno and Yobe before the polls on March 28. In the neighbouring North West, Kano, Jigawa and Kaduna remain at the risk of Boko Haram attacks as in the last three years, different parts of these states have been attacked by Boko Haram. Until the situation in the whole of the North East is addressed the possibility of more attacks could not effectively be ruled out. This is especially important now that the Boko Haram is being vigorously routed and considering the leaflets allegedly circulated by Boko Haram promising to disrupt the general elections.

Recommendations

- The APCON and NBC should effectively monitor and sanction media organisations and stations publishing advertorials with hate speeches;
- The early warning and response capability of the security agencies should be strengthened ahead of the polls and subsequently, a review of election security management be conducted after the general elections to ensure that areas of lapses are identified and remedial measures taken for future elections;
- The role of vigilantes and other non-formal security organisations operating outside of the formal security framework should be properly defined and regulated to ensure that they complement rather than compete with, or oppose the police and other formal security agencies that have the constitutional mandate of providing security before and during the elections;
- INEC should intensify its awareness campaign on the modalities for IDPs to vote especially for those who are outside of formal IDP camps as well as those who are presently outside their state of registration;
- INEC, the National Orientation Agency and the civil society should as a matter of urgency should intensify efforts on voter education and civic education programmes that fully educate the citizens as to why and how they must vote with the PVC;
- INEC should endeavour to make supplementary card readers available and accessible to polling units on election days to avoid unnecessary delays in the accreditation process. The challenges observed in the pre-test exercise should be immediately rectified and the adequately public sensitized;

- INEC should develop a process of dealing with the issue of discrepancies of details on the PVC and the Card Reader in a way that the Card Reader can be reconfigured in a timely manner so as to avoid disenfranchisement of any voter. Additionally, INEC should provide options that will facilitate and fine-tune the biometric authentication process;
- Adequate provision for transportation must be made for INEC staff and election materials especially in the rural, riverine and other difficult terrains of the country. This is crucial as delays in deployment of staff and materials as well as other logistic challenges on election day could be misinterpreted as a deliberate attempt to disenfranchise Nigerians;
- The INEC should make sure that all its poll workers are adequately trained particularly as the use of card readers makes the 2015 general elections different from the others conducted in the country. Furthermore, election officials should be adequately trained on crowd management and queue control as many studies have predicted high voter turnout in the forthcoming polls.
- INEC should collaborate with security agencies especially under the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES) to provide adequate security for the commission before, during and after the polls.
- Reported cases of politicians and others engaged in vote and PVC buying, thuggery, hate speech and other election offences should be adequately investigated and perpetrators prosecuted in accordance with the provision of section 124 of the Electoral Act 2010, as amended.
- The Abuja Accord on violence-free elections should be complied with by all political parties and candidates; while this publicly and

voluntarily signed accord could serve as a deterrent, the full force of the law should be brought to bear on all offenders.

- Civil society organisations should intensify their voter sensitisations against electoral violence, upscale their peace education and violence tracking. The use of the biometric verification and card readers means that unprecedented levels of sensitization are required as voters cannot rely on previous voting experience in 2015.