

DAILY

BULLETIN

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POLITICAL VIOLENCE: INEC WILL WORK WITH SECURITY AGENCIES TO ARREST AND PROSECUTE VIOLATORS - PROF. YAKUBU

With political campaigns entering the critical stage, Chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC), Prof. Mahmood Yakubu, has called for effective collaboration between the Commission and security agencies to address the menace of political violence by arresting and prosecuting violators.

He noted that the acts of violence during campaigns may be a prelude to violence on election day and beyond, hence the need to "tackle the smoke before it snowballs into a major inferno."

The INEC Chairman made the call at the opening of a third quarterly consultative meeting of the Inter-Agency Consultative Committee on Election Security (ICCES), held on Friday at the INEC Headquarters, Abuja.

Addressing heads of security agencies, Prof. Yakubu, who also doubles as the Co-Chairman of ICCES, said, "It is exactly a month since the commencement of campaign by political parties on September 28th, 2022, yet the incidents of physical attacks on supporters and destruction of campaign materials across the country are worrisome."

"At our consultative meeting two days ago, leaders of political parties in Nigeria also complained about the denial of access to public facilities and exorbitant charges in some states for the use of such facilities for the dissemination of their campaign materials, messages and rallies."

"These attacks and denials are a violation of the Electoral Act 2022 and ominous signs of what will follow as the campaigns enter critical stages.

They may also be a prelude to violence on Election Day and beyond. We should tackle the smoke before it snowballs into a major inferno."

"The effective enforcement of our electoral law is the best way to deal with the menace. We should work together to ensure the arrest and prosecution of violators of the provisions of the Electoral Act, especially Sections 92–93 of the Electoral Act 2022.

Prof. Yakubu also touched on the worrisome trend of vote buying and gave an update on the collaborative efforts to prosecute offenders. He said, "One of the worrisome practises perpetrated during elections by desperate individuals is vote buying and selling at polling units on election day."

"This Committee has severally discussed this matter. In our determination to curb the menace, the membership of ICCES was expanded to include the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

"The two agencies have been deploying their operatives during elections and this effort is paying off. For instance, following arrests made during the recent Osun State Governorship election held on 16th July this year, the EFCC made arrests and after investigation found evidence to charge the suspects to court in Osogbo. We are right now working with the EFCC to ensure their prosecution. I wish to commend the EFCC for this initiative and assure them of our support at all times".

The INEC Chairman further noted that there are important lessons from the Ekiti and Osun Governorship elections that will help in the planning for the 2023 General Election. He observed that "Synergy among the security agencies facilitated the timely deployment of election materials, the coordinated escort of personnel to various locations before the elections, and effective security at the polling units and collation centres".

He continued: "As a result, polling units opened on time, the collation of results started promptly, and declarations were made in good time. Going forward, Nigerians expect an even better performance during the 2023 General Election. Therefore, a lot of work lies ahead, but I am confident that we will do it effectively and professionally.

On his part, the National Security Adviser, General Babagana Monguno (Rtd), and Co-Chairman of ICCES, commended the tireless efforts of all security agencies in maintaining peace and order during the ongoing electioneering campaigns across the States.

The NSA, who was represented by Mr. Sanusi Galadima, observed the violent dimensions of electioneering campaigns, which characterise attacks on campaign rallies, political campaign offices, as well as the passing of uncomplimentary remarks and uncouth utterances among politicians, witnessed in some states, signalling potential threats to the smooth conduct of the forthcoming elections in February, 2023.

"While security agencies strategize on new measures to counter the rising wave of violence in the polity, the NSA hopes that the second phase of the signing of the "Peace Accord" by the National Peace Committee (NPC), scheduled for January 20, 2023, will be fruitful in deescalating the violent trend," the NSA said.

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