



National Early Warning System (NEWS)

Situation Report on the Mitigation of Threats to the peaceful conduct of the 2019 General Elections in Nigeria

December 2018

Introduction

On February 16 and March 2, 2019, the people of Nigeria would go to the polls in Presidential, Gubernatorial and Legislative elections. This would be the sixth multi-party elections in Nigeria since the end of military rule in 1999. For this reason, it represents a watershed in the annals of democratic governance and the quest to consolidate democracy in the political landscape of the country. There are 91 registered political parties contesting the respective elections, but the frontrunners are the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) led by the incumbent, President Muhammadu Buhari, who is seeking a second tenure of office and the main opposition, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) under the flagbearship of Ahaji Atiku Abubakar. Given the high stakes in the electoral contest, there are risks of heightened tension and violence, which could exacerbate the surging insecurity in Nigeria.

Against this backdrop, the situational report seeks to highlight incidents that threaten the peaceful conduct of the up-coming elections and offer recommendations for response and mitigation. The December situational report is hinged on indicators¹ reported in the WANEP Nigeria National Early Warning System (NEWS) as highlighted below.

¹The category of incidents recorded in the WANEP Nigeria NEWS include: Abuse of citizens' rights by security Forces; Armed attacks; Arms proliferation; Demonstrations; Destruction of properties; Electoral Fraud; Hate speeches/Dangerous messages; Incitements on social media; Media censorship; physical attacks; and Abuse of state resources. Available at: www.wanep.org/nigeriaelects/admin/?query_incident_report . Accessed on 16/01/2019.

Current Election Security Threats in Nigeria

Armed Attacks

- On December 1, 2018, four party supporters were injured in an attack carried out by suspected political party thugs after a reconciliation meeting conducted by the All Progressive Congress (APC) in Nassarawa Village, Gwaram Local Government Area (LGA) of Jigawa State. The meeting was convened to reconcile aggrieved political party members in the LGA ahead of the 2019 general election.
- On December 4, 2018, suspected political party thugs attacked the convoy of the African Democratic Congress (ADC) Governorship candidate, Gboyega Nasiru Isiaka, while on a campaign tour to Ibese, Yewa LGA of Ogun State. Two people including a female in the campaign team were injured in the incident.
- On December 13, 2018, suspected political party thugs armed with dangerous weapons assaulted a female APC supporter at Abakaliki LGA of Ebonyi State for refusing them to remove the campaign posters of the APC Governorship Candidate, Senator Sunny Ogbuoji, pasted on her building.
- On December 15, 2018, suspected thugs attacked a female APC House of Assembly candidate for Ohaozara-East constituency, Ngozichi Okoro, and her party supporters during the installation of solar panels, a project drawn by the APC Governorship candidate at Ohaozara LGA of Ebonyi State. Several people were injured with seven solar panels destroyed.
- On December 15, 2018, 3 people were allegedly killed with 5 people injured in a violent clash between rival APC youth groups during the flag off of the APC re-election campaign of the Kano State Governor in Rano LGA of Kano State. The victims were supporters of President Buhari's Special Adviser on National Assembly (House of Representatives), Abdulrahman Kawu. Further reports indicated that the clash was allegedly between supporters of Abdulrahman Kawu and Kabiru Gaya (both had contested for the senatorial ticket for Kano South with Kabiru Gaya renominated).
- On December 18, 2018, alleged APC youths used knives to destroy election posters and campaign materials of PDP aspirants which led to reprisal attack from alleged PDP

supporters in Bauchi, Bauchi State. 15 people sustained injuries in the incident and were taken to the hospital for treatment.

- On December 19, 2018, youth suspected to be party supporters clashed in Piakoro, Niger State, using knives and machetes. 5 people injured and properties destroyed.
- On December 20, 2018, the Governorship candidate of APC, Senator Sunny Ogbuoji, was attacked by suspected political opponents with machete and knives in Lzzi, Abakaliki Local Government area, Ebonyi State.
- On December 20, 2018, political party leaders and supporters clashed over the arrest and detention of community leaders in Ndiguazu Enybichiri, Ikwo Local Government area, Ebonyi State. 4 people sustained injuries and properties destroyed.
- On December 23, 2018, the Ward 7 Chairman of the All Progressive People's Congress (APC) in Onne, Eleme LGA of Rivers State, Mr. Jonah Chu, was shot dead while returning to his residence.
- On December 23, 2018, the APC Ward 9 Youth leader, the campaign coordinator of Tonye Cole Volunteers Group was shot dead alongside 4 others in Adada-Odua community, Abua/Odua LGA of Rivers State.
- On December 25, 2018, supporters of the Senate President, Senator Bukola Saraki, a PDP member and the governorship candidate of the APC, Alhaji Abdulrahman Abdulrazaq clashed during the annual fund raising ceremony of Ilorin Emirate Descendants Progressive Union (IEDPU) in Illorin, Kwara State. Campaign billboards of the APC Governorship candidate in Ilorin were allegedly vandalized by PDP supporters.
- Suspected political thugs stormed the venue of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) Ward meeting at Inorere area, Adavi LGA of Kogi State. The thugs armed with arms/ammunitions chased out members of the SDP with several female supporters injured. Plastic chairs and several other properties belonging to the SDP coordinator, Mr Badmus Abdulrahama, were set ablaze and destroyed.
- The campaign office of George Tagbo Ogara, one of the candidates laying claim to the Enugu State APC Governorship ticket was attacked by unknown persons with two campaign buses set ablaze on December 22, 2018.

Abuse of Citizens by Security Forces

- On December 28, 2018, Police personnel besieged the residence of Senator Dino Melaye in Abuja FCT for cases of criminal conspiracy and attempted homicide alleged to have been committed on July 19, 2018, following the injury of Police personnel by suspected armed thugs.

Arms Proliferation

- On December 20, 2018, Governor Ben Ayade of Cross River State granted amnesty² to over 1000 members of Bakassi Strike Force, a militant group operating at the creeks of Bakassi and Akpabuyo LGA's of the State. The group surrendered over 47 guns including AK47, General Purpose Machine (GPMG), rifles, pistols, live cartridges, amongst others.

Electoral Fraud

- On December 7, 2018, two APC candidates, Olanrewaju Suleiman Afinni and Hon. Olumoh Saad Lukman of the Lagos State House of Assembly approached the Federal High Court in Abuja to challenge an alleged plan by APC party members to substitute their names through forged letters to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), claiming their withdrawal³ from the race.
- On December 18, 2018, the Kwara State High Court ruled in favour of the APC Executive Committee led by Ishola Balogun-Fulani (Chairman of Kwara State APC) against the dissolution by the APC National Chairman, Adams Oshiomole. The dissolution by the National Chairman⁴ had led to the authentication of the Bashir Bolarinwa led faction of the APC in Kwara State.

²The amnesty was granted on the 17th of December 2018 in Ikang, Bakassi Local Government Area, Cross River State.

³ Their alleged withdrawal forms were submitted to INEC on November 30, 2018 and signed by the State APC Deputy National Chairman

⁴ The APC National Chairman, Adams Oshiomole, had on July 30, 2018 dissolved the executive led by Ishola Balogun-Fulani following the defection of the Senate President, Bukola Saraki to PDP.

Demonstrations/Actions

- On December 11, 2018, a Governorship candidate of the Action Alliance (AA) in Imo State, Leonard Okolienta threatened to embark on mass action against his party following the emergence of Uche Nwosu as the AA governorship flagbearer in the State.
- On December 12, 2018, a peaceful demonstration was organised by the Coalition of Enugu Women at the INEC office and Enugu State House of Assembly demanding a level playing field for female candidates and violence free elections in Enugu State.
- On December 13, 2018, a partnership of local and international NGOs, South Sahara Development organisation, NOA, OSIWA and DFID held an advocacy campaign against vote buying and voter education in Ogbete Market, Enugu.
- On December 17, 2018, members of the National Youth Council of Nigeria, South East zone embarked on public awareness and sensitization campaign on voter education and non-violent election in Ogbete main market, Enugu State on December 17, 2018.
- The Gubernatorial candidate of AA, Chief Uche Nwosu, was reportedly hooted at, as his supporters were mobbed by suspected thugs at a crusade ground in Ikenebu, Owerri, Imo State on the 18th of December 2018. 10 people sustained injuries and properties damaged.

Destruction of Properties

- The Police in Lagos State arrested 6 persons allegedly involved in the destruction of campaign posters of political parties on December 9, 2018. The suspects who belong to a group known as 'Take it Back Movement' were replacing posters of opponent political parties with that of the African Action Congress (AAC).
- On December 12, 2018, unknown people destroyed posters, billboard and other campaign material on the road side in Iyin, Ekiti State.
- On December 12, 2018, there were reported cases of destruction of posters and billboards in the local media by alleged supporters of opponent political parties in Iyin, Ekiti State.

- On December 12, 2018 in Maiduguri LGA, Borno State, there were reports that youths allegedly sponsored by politicians embarked on the destruction of campaign materials including, posters and banners of opposition parties.
- Major political parties, including PDP, APC and African Democratic Congress (ADC) Gubernatorial candidates accused each other's supporters of destroying campaign materials such as posters, banners, flyers, and billboards on December 14 2018 at Ibadan, Oyo State.
- Billboards of the Labour Party Senatorial candidate for Imo West zone, Uche Ibe, were destroyed by alleged youths of opponent political parties on December 20 2018 in Owerri Ebeiri, Imo State. 20 people injured and other communal properties destroyed.
- The Action Alliance candidate of Orlu/Osu Federal Constituency in Imo State, Ikenna Ihezuo, accused the APC candidate, Chief Eddy Iheanachu on December 21, 2018, of being responsible for the destruction of his campaign posters and billboards.

Hate Speeches/Dangerous Messages

- The Senator representing APC North West senatorial district of Benue State, George Akume, was alleged to have told his party supporters at a political rally in Gboko that Tiv people who were allegedly murdered by herdsmen was masterminded by the State Governor, Samuel Ortom, on December 9, 2018.
- A PDP Gubernatorial candidate, Jimi Agbaje, on December 18, 2018, commented on *Twitter* stating that APC is an anti-Igbo political party. This in itself can incite Igbos against the APC party in Lagos State.

Incitements on Social Media

- On December 11 2018, Hon. Ikani, Federal Law maker representing Dekina/Bassa constituency, published on *Facebook* that traditional rulers in Igala land are responsible for violence in the community. This ignited violent counter comments spreading across different social media platforms.

- On December 18, 2018, social media comments from supporters of Senator Omo Agege of APC and Hon. Evelyn Oboro of PDP alleged that the two contestants are using community projects as tools to spread hate messages against each other. This has heightened tension among supporters of both sides.

Physical Attacks

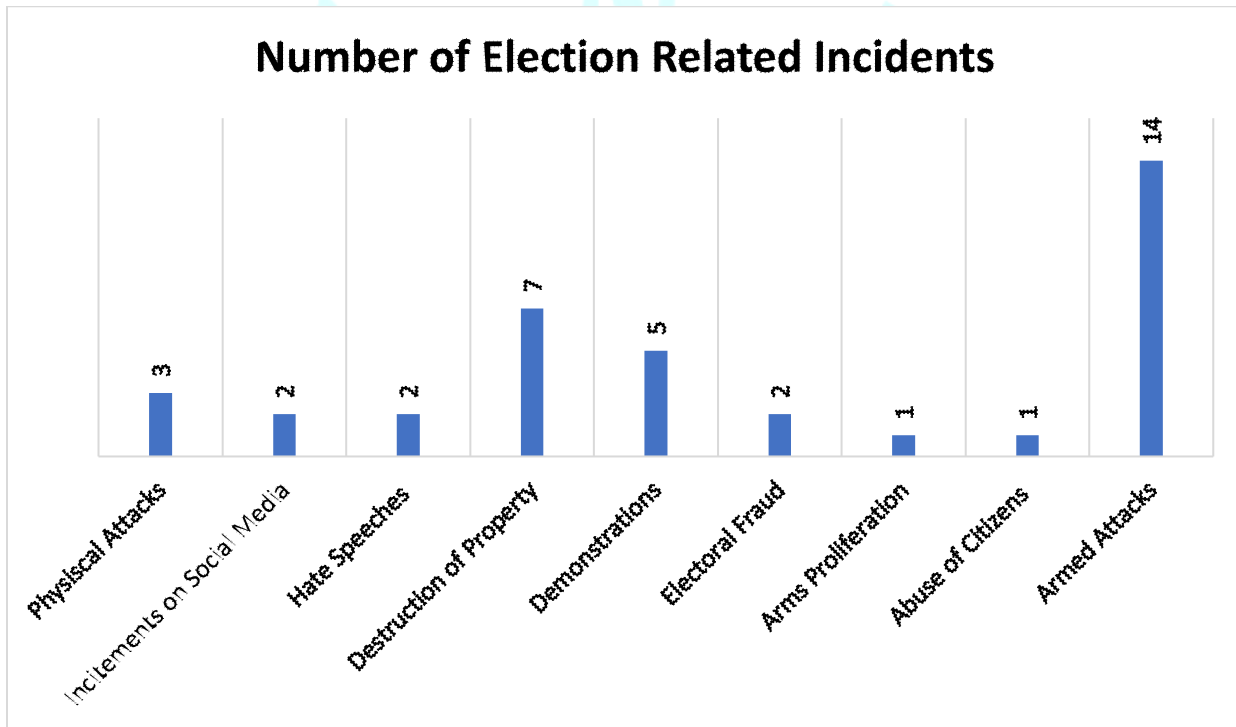
- On December 17, 2018, supporters of APC Gubernatorial and Senatorial candidates clashed over internal political disagreements. The supporters attacked party executives in Umuobom community, Ideato South Local Government Area, Imo State, injuring 15 people and damaging properties.
- On December 18 2018, supporters of APC in Tudun Wada area known as Marafa and Koguna Boys physically attacked each other while pasting campaign posters and billboards of their candidates in Gusau Zamfara state. 2 people sustained injuries.
- On December 25, 2018, disgruntled group of young people mounted roadblocks to stop political activities in their community in Maiduguri, Borno State. 5 people sustained injuries and properties destroyed.

Statistical Overview of Electoral Threats

According to WANEP NEWS election monitoring report, 37 election related incidents were reported in December 2018 across 16 States⁵ in Nigeria. The category of incidents include: physical attacks, incitements on social media, hate speeches, destruction of campaign materials, demonstrations, electoral fraud, arms proliferation, abuse of citizens by the security agencies and armed attacks. Among the aforementioned incident categories, armed attacks was the highest with 14 incidents, destruction of properties and campaign materials with 7 incidents reported, followed by demonstrations with 5. Physical attacks recorded 3 incidents while arms proliferation is the least with 1 incident reported.

⁵The 16 States where incidents were reported to the WANEP NEWS election monitoring systems are: Borno, Bauchi, Niger, Ebonyi, Benue, Rivers, Kogi, Cross Rivers, Lagos, Kwara, Imo, Enugu, Ekiti, Oyo, Kanu and Zamfara.

Figure 1: A chart on the number of election related incidents reported in December 2018



Source: Data generated from WANEP NEWS

From the chart above, increasing number of armed attacks on political party opponents is largely due to rivalry, resulting in heightened tension as the General Elections draw closer. This occurred mainly in Borno, Bauchi, Niger, Rivers, Ebonyi and Benue States. 11 people have died while 41 have sustained serious injuries in the armed attacks. The deaths occurred mostly in the northern Nigeria, especially Borno and Benue states known for arm proliferation, terrorism and other criminal activities. With the elections coming, this trend is likely to be heightened. With regard to destruction of properties and campaign materials including posters, banners and billboards of political opponents, 7 incidents were recorded in Lagos, Ekiti, Borno, Oyo, Imo and Enugu States. 20 people sustained injuries from the clashes as result of destruction of opponents' campaign materials mostly in Imo States. This indicates increase in political intimidations, reprisal and revenge, which could affect election security and the electoral calendar.

In addition to the aforementioned, the month of December also recorded high incidents of demonstrations. WANEP NEWS recorded 6 demonstrations in Imo, Enugu and Kwara States.

While 10 people sustained injuries in Imo State demonstrations, Kwara State also recorded 1 injury with public and private properties damaged. Though Kwara State demonstrations did not result in injuries, there were considerable damage caused to properties. While the risk associated with this trend is low and therefore considered not to be a major threat to the peaceful conduct of the elections, however, it is imperative for security measures to be strengthened to forestall its potential consequences on the electoral process. Beside this, physical attacks are also a pertinent security concern that requires appropriate security response. 3 incidents of physical attacks were recorded in the month under review in Kanu, Imo, Zamfara and Borno States. The attacks resulted in 3 deaths and 27 people sustaining injuries, as well as properties damaged. Notably, the youth in the states that the incidents occurred were either the perpetrators or victims of the ensued political violence. This raises concerns about the increasing mobilization of the youth as a resource for electoral violence. Given the prevailing security context of Nigeria, persistent utilisation of young people as tools for perpetration of violent acts, there is a risk of its potential threat to the elections. If this trend continues unabated, it would cause fear and panic among voters and adversely affect voter turnout.

Recommendations

- The National Peace Committee should strengthen collaboration with CSOs, youth and women groups, political parties, traditional leaders and religious institutions to intensify peace and security dialogue in communities to ensure non-violence and peaceful elections.
- ECOWAS, CSOs, the National Peace Committee and other relevant stakeholders in peace and security in Nigeria should strengthen effort to ensure political parties' adherence to the provisions of the Abuja Peace Accord signed by the presidential candidates of the various political parties.
- The Federal Government should collaborate with international partners to enhance sustained efforts to strengthen the security agencies to deal with physical and armed violence before, during and after elections.

- CSOs, the Media, faith-based organisations, youth and women’s groups, and relevant state institutions should enhance civic, non-violence and peace education in communities in the lead up to the elections.

