

MONTHLY TRACKING OF HATE SPEECH & ELECTION ATROCITIES IN NIGERIA



.....a Monthly tracking of hate speech & election atrocities in Nigeria

This report documents incidents of hate speech, malicious propagation of fake news, violence and other forms of elections-related atrocities for the month of December 2022.



DECEMBER, 2022



Attack on INEC and Police Facilities

In December 2022, there were sustained attacks against the assets and personnel of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). During this period, we documented 4 instances of attacks on INEC staff and the vandalization of the Commission's facilities. All of the incidents documented occurred in Imo state. They include:

- i. An attack on INEC headquarters in Owerri, Imo state on December 12 – the office was vandalized, while the building and an official utility vehicle were burnt.
- ii. An attack on the INEC office in Orlu LGA, Imo state on December 1 – the office was vandalized and set ablaze.
- iii. An attack on the INEC office in Oru West LGA, Imo state on December 4 – the office was vandalized.
- iv. An attack on the INEC office in Isu Local Government Area, Imo state – the office was vandalized.

In all 4 incidents, none of the attackers was identified or arrested.

Attacks on Police Assets

The brazen attacks against police divisions, particularly in the South East region continued unabated in the month of December.

In consonance with recent patterns of violence in the South East, the Ihiala Police Divisional Headquarters in Ihiala Local Government Area of Anambra State was bombed with improvised explosive devices razing down the whole facility.

Preamble

In December 2022, a series of troubling incidents which pose a threat to the forthcoming general elections were documented. An analysis of these incidents suggests that fake news, hate speech, attack on critical facilities, attacks on politically exposed persons, and security assets are factors, if not immediately dealt with, will negatively impact the 2023 elections. Below are some of the incidents that occurred in December 2022.



Hate Speech

Politicians in some parts of the country including the Majority Leader of the Kano State House of Assembly, Alhassan Ado Garba (Doguwa), were documented as having used the inflammatory language of hate speech during their campaigns. “On 5th of December 2022, Mr Garba made an utterance in Hausa language which is literally translated to mean “On the day of election, wallahi, a person should either vote for APC or you will be dealt with. The day of election you either vote for APC, or you will be dealt with”. The Kano state office of the Nigeria Broadcasting Corporation, (NBC) expressed concern over what they termed the “dangerous political campaign trend on local radio and television stations”. This led NBC to place 30 broadcast stations in Kano on what the Commission termed the “black map” for propelling what the commission termed hatred and violent comments by political actors.

There is a growing concern of this trend overshadowing the need for an issue-based campaign process that would expand the space for decent conversation between the political office seekers and the electorates. We, therefore, call for the umptieth time, on the candidates of the various political parties and their supporters to guide against utterances capable of truncating the peaceful electioneering process.



- **Attacks on Politicians & Politically Exposed Persons**



- **Attacks on INEC Facilities**



- **Attack on Police Facilities**



Attacks on Politicians and other Politically Exposed Persons

Physical attacks on politically exposed persons continued unabated in the month of December. Among the incidents recorded was the attack on the Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party Presidential Campaign Council in Rivers State, Senator Lee Maeba, whose residence was invaded by suspected political thugs. While no life was lost in the incident, several assets including five personal and campaign vehicles were destroyed by the attackers.

The campaign office of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) governorship candidate in Rivers State, Senator Magnus Abe was attacked in the same period. Similarly, Osun State's former Commissioner for Works, Mr Remi Omowaiye, and his team were attacked by thugs at Isida market in Ilesa area in Osun State while distributing Christmas welfare packages to indigent people in the market area on 23rd December.

Killings

The general and more perverse forms of insecurity, in particular, terrorist attacks continued unabated in December 2022. The macabre murder of 33 wives of ISWAP leaders in a reprisal attack by Boko Haram, in addition to the killing of civilians and police officers during community raids. According to Global Rights mass atrocities tracking for December 2022, there were at least 463 killings including of 23 security personnel and at least 630 abductions across Nigeria. The unchecked nature of these incidents with less than 40 days to the elections could impact voter turnout during the elections as fear of attacks and general dissatisfaction with the government's response to the security situation could trigger a higher voter apathy.

Conclusion

The incidents that took place in December 2022, especially those targeted at INEC facilities, are certainly creating fear and apprehension amongst the citizens and this has the potential to disrupt the smooth process of the forthcoming general elections in Nigeria. The continued attacks on INEC personnel and facilities would directly impact the conduct of the elections as INEC would be obligated to safeguard its personnel by not deploying them to these volatile areas. The INEC Chairman, Professor Mahmood Yakubu, had repeatedly insisted that should the present state of insecurity and attacks on offices of the commission continue, the general election might be threatened. This is in accordance with Section 24(2)&(3) of the Electoral Act which provides for the postponement of elections in emergencies.

Also, some of these communities where there is increased violence, particularly in the South East are already inaccessible to members of the civil society community due to continued violence.

Candidates of the various political parties and their supporters must also guide against utterances capable of truncating the peaceful electioneering process.

In the words of António Guterres, the United Nations Secretary-General, "Hatred is a danger to everyone, and so fighting it must be a job for everyone." Therefore, citizens must rise up to demand accountability from everyone on incidents of hate speech as it has the tendency of instigating violence against individuals and groups.

HATE SPEECH is when you speak, write or conjure a gesture that attacks or discriminates against another person or people because of politics, ethnicity, gender, race or religious beliefs!