

 **Tuesday 24 October, 2023**

This report documents incidents of hate speech, malicious propagation of fake news, violence and other forms of election-related atrocities associated with the elections in Bayelsa, Kogi and Imo states for the week of 16th – 23rd October, 2023.

Preamble

As the gubernatorial elections in Kogi, Bayelsa, and Imo states draws closer, our tracker continues to document incidents of violence in these regions. With less than three weeks to the elections, our tracker recorded at least 3 attacks on politically exposed persons in Kogi state in the past week.

Attacks on politically exposed persons

1) **October 18, 2023:** Gunmen attack the convoy of the Kogi state SDP governorship candidate, 2) Murtala Yakubu - Ajaka, at Ogori Mangogo, Kogi state.

2) **October 18, 2023:** Thugs disrupted a Social Democratic Party (SDP) campaign at Ejule, Ofu L.G.A, Kogi state.

Incidents of Hate Speech

Though, we haven't recorded the level of ethnic profiling and associated hate speech like we witnessed during the General Elections in February and March this year, tensions are rift among the supporters of the various political parties and the different political actors are applying subtle pressure on their followers through accusations and counter-accusations of attacks by perceived political rivals.

Incident of Fake News

On October 22, 2023, news reports covered an alleged attack the convoy of Yahaya Bello, the governor of Kogi State. The news stated that men dressed in military uniforms sporadically shot at his convoy at 4 pm, a few kilometers away from Abuja. The governor has since refuted this claims, stating that there was no such attack on him or anyone in his convoy.

Conclusion

A close examination of these incidents, including the brutal murder of at least 17 officers in Ehime Mbano L.G.A, Imo State, and the abduction of a retired Military General in Owerri L.G.A. of Imo state in September 2023, reflects a recurring pattern of violence at the state level, reminiscent of what occurred during the recently concluded election cycle. It is evident that the use of violence as a tool for intimidation is on the rise, with instances of gunmen and thug attacks becoming more prominent. If this escalation in violence is not curbed, it could potentially overshadow the electoral process, leading to bloodshed and chaos determining the outcome, rather than a peaceful and democratic process.

As we look ahead to the forthcoming elections in Imo, Bayelsa, and Kogi states, it is essential to remember and prevent a repeat of the violence that occurred. This underscores the importance of securing these states to ensure safe, free, and fair elections, as fear can have a negative impact on voter turnout.