

 **Tuesday 7th November 2023**

This report compiles instances of hate speech, the deliberate spread of false information, acts of violence, and various election-related crimes linked to the elections held in Bayelsa, Kogi, and Imo states during the week of **30 th October – 5 th November, 2023**.

Preamble

It is less than a week to the gubernatorial elections in Kogi, Bayelsa, and Imo states, over the previous week, our trackers documented 2 politically motivated killings in 5 violent incidents.

Attacks on politically exposed persons

1. November 1 st , 2023: One person was killed when a security aide to Governor Hope Uzodinma, Chinasa Nwaneri who commands the Ebubeagu state controlled militia, in company of thugs accompanied by police officers from the Tiger Base and other formations under the Imo State Police Command violently assaulted the leaders and members of the Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC), and abducted Joe Ajaero, the President of the NLC, having also brutalized him at Imo State NLC Secretariat, Owerri, Imo State. (1 Killed)

2. November 4th, 2023: The governorship candidate of the Labour Party for the November 11 governorship election in Imo state, Attan Achonu, accused the police in the state of attacking him and his convoy and preventing him from attending a church service in the Owerri North L.G.A of the state.

3. November 2, 2023: Timi Biriya Macdonald was confirmed dead after him and another PDP Chieftain Diepreye Akrisia, were brutally attacked by suspected APC thugs at Nembe L.G.A of Bayelsa State. (1 killed)

Attacks on political party supporters

1. November 4, 2023: A girl was injured during a fight between an SDP and APC supporter over campaign posters on the wall of a house at Agbudu town, Kogi L.G.A, Kogi state.

2. October 30th, 2023: A man wearing an APC campaign cap was brutally injured by PDP supporters at Osiris road, Bayelsa State.

Hate speech and Fake news

1. November 2, 2023: After the brutalization of the NLC national President Joe Ajaero, during a press conference, Calistus Ihejiagwa, the Imo state NLC chairman stated that “Uzodinma is Planning to Rig Imo Governorship Election”. Mr Ihejiagwa did not provide any evidence or expatiated his claim which is capable of instigating violence even against the election officers on election day as people would have concluded that they were already compromised.

2. November 2, 2023: At a press conference, the Governorship candidate of the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) Kogi State, Dino Melaye, stated that “Hired thugs have been invited from Lagos and Saki in Oyo State.” Implying that the current Kogi state Governor Yahaya Bello, is bringing thugs to disrupt the upcoming governorship elections. These were allegations that were not expatiated and could be misleading.

Conclusion

As the election fast approaches, identified flashpoints within the concerned states demand immediate attention and proactive measures to ensure the peaceful conduct of the upcoming election.

It is imperative that all stakeholders, including governors and security officers in the affected states, exercise restraint in making statements or taking actions that could potentially tip the balance in favor of any candidate or incite civil unrest. The role of security agencies in providing adequate security before, during, and after the election cannot be overstated, as the safety of lives and property is paramount in this electoral process.

The occurrence of abductions of politically exposed individuals and spread of hate speeches are increasingly becoming alarming and, if left unchecked, could escalate the risk of an unfair and violence-ridden election. Government intervention is crucial to address the increasing insecurities and electoral atrocities in these states and to restore peace and order in society.

This situation presents a second chance for the concerned authorities to rebuild trust among citizens who were dissatisfied with the processes and outcomes of the general elections conducted earlier in the year. By taking decisive actions to ensure a secure and fair electoral environment, authorities can work towards a more transparent and trusted electoral process, ultimately strengthening democracy in the affected regions.