

 **Tuesday 31st October 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 **23 rd - 29 th October, 2023**.

Preamble

As the gubernatorial elections in Kogi, Bayelsa, and Imo states approach, over the previous week, our trackers documented two confrontations between supporters of political parties. Attacks on politically exposed persons.

1) October 24, 2023: Chalito James (an SDP supporter) was brutally attacked by Rufai Mohammed, lookman Haruna, Arab Musa, Friday Agbo and eleven other opposition party members who had earlier threatened him to decamp to their party APC or leave the town. This attack took place at Dekina L.G.A Kogi state.

2) October 27, 2023: While sharing bags of rice amongst supporters, a fight broke up between an APC youth leader and an APC supporter at Gwaris quarters Koton Karfe, Kogi State.

Incidents of Fake News

Members of the APC and community members from the hometown of the Governorship candidate of the APC, Timipre Sylva, threatened political violence in the event that Sylva is disqualified from contesting the November 11 Bayelsa State gubernatorial election. This came after news spread in some quarters that Sylva has been disqualified from contesting in the election, and the use of inflammatory language targeted at Sylva during the electioneering campaign by the PDP

Conclusion

Despite the seemingly calm situation as the gubernatorial elections draw near, it is important to note that there is heightened tension between the APC candidate in Bayelsa State, Timipre Sylva, and the incumbent Governor, Douye Diri of PDP, as well as between SDP candidate in Kogi State, Murtala Ajaka, and Usman Ododo from APC. The constant use of verbal attacks, fake news, and threats of violence is one that requires these candidates to be called to order, as the vile trickles down to their supporters who have shown a willingness to resort to violence.

Residents of Imo state appear to be apprehensive about coming out to vote in the forthcoming elections for fear of impending violence, as there appears to be an increase in military presence within the state. The popular dissatisfaction with the Presidential and National Assembly Elections in February and March this year coupled with the outcome of the presidential election tribunal seem to have compounded the already brooding voter apathy in most of the states especially Imo state.

Nigerians must increasingly be made aware that voting is not only about exercising our democratic right and expressing the will of the people but also a way of demanding the services that we deserve from those we can trust. Consequently, personal responsibility is a more valuable position than any political grievance.