

PRE-ELECTION PRESS STATEMENT AND OPENING OF SITUATION ROOM FOR THE JULY 16, 2022, OSUN STATE GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION HELD AT JULIE MORADEKE SERVICED APARTMENTS HOTEL AND SUITES, DADA ESTATE, OSOGBO ON THURSDAY 14TH, 2022 BY THE CENTRE FOR TRANSPARENCY ADVOCACY, ABUJA.

Introduction

The Centre for Transparency Advocacy (CTA), an accredited election observer group, has keenly watched developments and the preparedness of critical stakeholders for the July 16, 2022, Osun State Governorship Election. The CTA has lined up activities as its contribution towards a free, credible, peaceful, fair, inclusive, and conclusive election. This press conference will address our preliminary findings and concerns.

Political Environment: 15 political parties will be presenting candidates to seek for the mandate and votes of the citizens across the 30 Local Government Areas, 332 wards and 3,763 polling units. So far, the political environment is calm as political parties are going about their campaigns without necessarily heating up the polity. Our advance team has been on ground for over five days in the state and has not witnessed infractions. The holiday period provided an opportunity for citizens and political parties to interact and share in the conviviality provided by the holiday. The Centre for Transparency Advocacy commends the prevailing peaceful atmosphere and hopes that it is maintained throughout the election period and after the election on Saturday.

How prepared are the citizens? There are about 1,955,657 registered voters in Osun state. Out of this number, 1,479,595 representing 76 per cent of registered voters have collected their PVCs as at 10/7/2022 according to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). It is noteworthy that citizens are prepared to cast their votes having shown such tremendous interest in the collection of their PVCs. We also believe that Osun citizens took advantage of the extension of the time for the collection of PVCs by INEC till today, Thursday 14, 2022. We urge citizens to be peaceful as they come out on Saturday to vote for candidates of their choice. It is our belief that a collective resolve of the citizens to do the right things will be a boost to our democracy.

The CTA notes with disappointment the endemic practice of vote trading that adds no value to our democratic process. We, therefore, urge citizens not to partake in this inglorious and criminal practice but rather work for a better democratic process that will be free, and fair.

The Independent National Electoral Commission: We commend the incremental progress recorded by INEC at every election. We have noticed steady progress from Anambra Governorship Election to the recently concluded Ekiti State Governorship Election where results were collated, and a winner declared in less than twenty-four hours. This is commendable and we hope that Osun State will be better. INEC announced that it will be deploying for the first time, 35 persons with

Disability from the National Youth Service Corps. This is highly commendable, and we urge the media, citizens, and security agencies to accord them necessary assistance on the field.

In the same manner, INEC has announced that it will deploy five National Commissioners and twelve Resident Electoral Commissioners to monitor and supervise the election on Saturday. The number of accredited Observer groups by INEC are 87 (79 domestic and 8 international), comprising 7792 Observers, while there are 94 accredited media organisations (92 domestic and 2 foreign) with 624 journalists that will be reporting events. These deployments will hopefully aid to the achievement of a credible election on Saturday with the deployment of the B-VAS, the new technological innovation in the electoral process.

Stakeholders' meeting has become a critical activity by INEC as part of their preparedness towards conducting free, credible, fair, peaceful, inclusive, and conclusive elections in Nigeria. Also, the briefing by INEC for accredited observers before election is appreciated. The CTA commends INEC for making this a permanent feature of the electoral process.

The role of traditional rulers and the National Peace Committee: The CTA commends the traditional institutions for encouraging peaceful elections. We especially commend the Ooni of Ife His Imperial Majesty Oba Adeyeye, Enitan Ogunwusi, Ojaja II who had consistently urged the Osun people to be peaceful and has continued to play his role as a father to all. This he has shown by being physically present at the stakeholders meeting and the signing of the peace accord by political parties and candidates. We equally, commend the role that the National Peace Committee is playing to ensure peaceful elections in Nigeria. We hope that politicians and all political actors will abide by the peace agreements signed. It is important that they do so.

Security and flash points: The Inspector General of Police was firm in his charge to security agencies to discharge their duties professionally and within the Standard Operation Practice and rules of engagement. We note that the police will be deploying 21,000 personnel while the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) will deploy 1,500. The Inspector General of Police further admonished other security agencies that will be deployed to strictly adhere to the rules of engagement as earlier announced. Though there is a seemingly peaceful atmosphere so far, there are a few identified flash points where security agencies are expected to beam their searchlight and curtail any threat to security. The following areas have been identified as flash points Ife Central, Ife South, Ife East, Ilesa East and West, Ede North and South, Iwo, and some parts of Osogbo LGA.

CTA's Preparedness:

Stakeholders meeting and media engagements: The Centre for Transparency Advocacy carried out various engagements to sensitize the citizens and other critical stakeholders to be advocates of free and peaceful election. We held a stakeholder's meeting on June 28, 2022, with security agencies, National Orientation Agency, Youth groups, religious leaders, People with Disability, market men and women among others in attendance. We also engaged these stakeholders in their various offices to exchange and share ideas for hitch free election. The media was not left out as

we had media engagements to further buttress the importance of a peaceful, credible free, inclusive and conclusive election on July 16, 2022.

Training of observers and deployment: This afternoon, the CTA trained the 60 accredited observers and will be deploying them across the 30 LGAs of Osun State on Saturday. It is expected that they will rely on the skills and knowledge acquired from the training to report factually and in real time to the CTA Situation Room.

Opening of Situation Room: As part of our tradition, the Centre for Transparency has set up a Situation Room that is manned by our expert team to receive reports from field observers in real time. This practice helps the CTA to situate events, escalate and report events as they occur. Gentlemen of the press, dear colleagues, and friends, on this note, I hereby declare open the CTA Situation Room for the July 16, 2022, Osun State Governorship Election. We invite you here again on Saturday, 16th for the Preliminary report at the close of polls by 5:30 pm.

In conclusion

1. We call on political actors to ensure that their actions and words do not trigger violence and heat up the polity unnecessarily before and after the election on Saturday.
2. We urge security agencies to give assurances and make adequate provisions to protect electorates before and after the election while discharging their duties professionally.
3. We urge citizens to come out enmasse and exercise their democratic rights by voting for candidates of their choice.
4. INEC should ensure that the coordination and delivery of the Osun election should be taken a notch higher than the just concluded Ekiti election. Also, that its personnel to be deployed are trained properly on the use of the BVAS machines to ensure free, fair, credible inclusive, and conclusive governorship election.
5. Citizens must shun vote trading. It is only where there is a willing buyer that there is a willing seller.
6. We call on parents and youths not to allow themselves to be used as political thugs to disrupt peaceful conduct of the election.

Thank you

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