



PRESS STATEMENT

ELECTION DAY 23rd FEBRUARY 2019

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) presents its Election Day Press statement on the ongoing Nigeria's Presidential and National Assembly elections of 23rd February 2019. This is a follow-up to the introductory statement issued on 15th February 2019, which outlined the process establishing the WANEP Election Situation Room with the aim of supporting credible and peaceful elections; as well as the 16th February 2019 statement on the postponement of the general elections by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for a week.

For the 23rd February 2019, WANEP deployed 114 Election Observers to take stock of the voting process in the 36 states of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT)-Abuja using the Arc GIS technology that was developed by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The following are our observations on the process so far:

Opening of the Polls:

- Observers noted the commencement of voting on time in most polling stations across the country. However, observers reported late opening of polls in several stations due to late arrival of polling officials and materials.
- In some cases, as at 10:00 am, materials were yet to be distributed to areas such as Gwagwalada Area Council of FCT and Mashi LGA of Katsina State.
- In an isolated case, the absence of security personnel at Shehu Manzo ward of Gombe LGA, Gombe State resulted in delay of the commencement of polls.
- Card readers were not functioning appropriately in some stations visited for example, in Ward 4, PU 002 at St. Jonathan in Ondo State; and also Yardole Kasuwa area of Kebbi State, but the technicians addressed the situation. Concerns abound over the disenfranchisement of eligible voters due to technical issues experienced with the use of card readers.
- Observers noted the inducement of voters in Kumbotso LGA of Kano State and Konshisha LGA of Benue State, where voters were reportedly seen receiving money from party stalwarts to vote their preferred candidates.
- Key violent incidents reported include shooting in Ayingba, Dekina LGA of Kogi State; fighting in Ward 18 Khana, Port Harcourt, Rivers State following alleged snatching of voting materials.
- Despite the late commencement of polls in affected areas, voters reportedly conducted themselves peacefully and orderly, except in a few cases where isolated violent incidents occurred.

Voting Process:

- Observers noted moderate voter turnout in polling stations visited. They also observed orderliness and the compliance with voting procedures by polling officials in most polling stations.
- Voting materials were reported to be sufficient in most polling stations. However, ballot papers were insufficient for the number of registered voters in some polling stations.
- Observers also reported the absence of senatorial ballot boxes at Karji LEA primary school, a situation that instigated some tension. However, voting proceeded without the senatorial ballot papers.
- Voting materials arrived quite late in some polling stations such as Ward 8, PU 009 of Osun Central where voting commenced at 2:35 pm. However, as at the time of official closing of 2pm, voting materials were yet to arrive some polling stations.
- **Observers reported at least 31 major incidents** including the following:
 - In Borno and Yobe states, armed attacks and explosions were reported in some locations.
 - In Lagos State, observers reported the intimidation of voters at several polling stations in Okota, Aguda, Alimosho and Oshodi/Isolo LGA; as well as burning of ballot boxes in ward 018 in Ago Palace Way and 023 Baba Ewe area in Okota LGA. Ballot boxes were reportedly snatched by suspected political thugs, who chased voters away in PU 036 of Obisanya street, Mafoluku, Oshodi LGA. People of a certain ethnic group were reportedly turned away from voting in a polling station in Banwo Street, Aguda area of Surulere; those who were allowed to vote were followed to the polling booth to see whom they voted for.
 - In Kogi State, a 19-year old boy was killed at PU 006 Ajetachi in Ayangba Kogi State over refusal to vote for a party. Ballot boxes were burnt in Okesi ward of Ogori/Magongo LGA.
 - In Akwa Ibom State, polling officials were reportedly abducted and election materials destroyed in Itu LGA; and ballot boxes were also reportedly snatched by political thugs in Ini LGA.
 - In Rivers State, election materials were seized at Wards 4 and 12 of Ikwerre LGA amid heavy shooting. The former Chairman of PDP in Rivers State was shot dead by unidentified gunmen in Andoni LGA. Electoral materials were also hijacked for 14 out of 16 wards at Gokana LGA.
 - In Zamfara State, election materials were reportedly destroyed in PU 004 of Madawaki ward, a situation that disrupted the voting process. In response, the police fired sporadic gunshots to disperse suspected thugs and moved the election materials to the central police station.
 - In Yobe State, a 35-year old man was shot by military men of 223 Brigade Command, Buni Gari, Gujba LGA at 8:30am and died by 1:00pm.
 - In Delta State, PU 005 of ward 2 was moved to a secondary school. The gates of the school were locked, preventing observers and voters from gaining

entry to the premises. However, members of a particular political party were allegedly allowed entry.

The Closing and Counting Process:

- As at 2pm, observers noted that those on the queue were allowed to vote. It was also observed that some polling stations continued beyond 2pm following INEC's extension of voting by the amount of time lost before the commencement of voting.
- As at 2:20pm, observers reported that some polling stations commenced sorting and counting of ballot papers as evident in PU 003, ward 11 Ibadan North LGA of Oyo State; Unit 009 Ijaija Rosery School, Agrigidi/Iye ward 1, Akoko North West of Ondo North Senatorial district.

Recommendations:

WANEP recognizes and appreciates the diverse interventions undertaken by key stakeholders especially INEC to resolve lapses in the voting process as well as deployment of security officials to contain violent incidents and restore normalcy in affected areas. However, in view of the delayed arrival of materials in some polling stations as well as increasing reported violence, there is need for concerted and reinforced effort to ensure the prevention and mitigation of violence during the counting and collation processes as well as in the aftermath of the announcement of results. In this regard, WANEP makes the following recommendations to ensure the promotion of peace and stability in the remaining process:

- INEC should regularly provide updates on the collation process to assure the public of the transparency of the process.
- WANEP condemns violence reported and calls on security agencies to reinforce security in affected areas but also in other areas to prevent and mitigate potential violence that may arise.
- Security agencies should maintain utmost professionalism in the discharge of their duties and assure the electorate of their commitment to maintaining law and order throughout the process.
- WANEP calls on the Security agencies to investigate reported incidents of explosions on election day as it is critical for developing contingency plans for future elections.
- Candidates and Political parties should abide by the Peace Accord and refrain from inflammatory statements or publication of results and all acts that are capable of instigating violence as we await the official announcement of results by INEC.

Collaborators:



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