OFFICIAL: ELECTIONS POSTPONED FOLLOWING CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

- Ongoing security threat in the North East too overwhelming
- Poor election preparations not the cause, insists INEC
- Decision contradicts military statement last week
- Postponement defies advice of CSOs, main opposition parties and observers
- Presidential, Senatorial and House of Assembly moved to March 28th
- Gubernatorial and State of Assembly moved to April 11th

It was announced late on Saturday night that the election dates in Nigeria will be postponed by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

After a day of relentless posturing and consultations with major stakeholders, observers were openly concerned that the Commission would renegade on longstanding plans to hold the Presidential vote on the 14th of February, and Gubernatorial and State of Representative polls two weeks later on the 28th.

Concerns were realised when Chairman of INEC, Professor Attahiru Jega addressed the waiting Nation at 23:00 pm when he announced that, “There are a number of issues that are critical to elections, like security which is not under the control of INEC […] In consideration of the advice by the security agencies, it will be unconscionable to have elections without adequate security.”

“Consequently, the Commission has rescheduled the elections, Presidential, Senatorial and House of Assembly has been moved to March 28th. Governorship and SOA has been rescheduled to April 11th.”

This is allowed for in the constitution, which stipulates that the election must be conducted 30 days before the handover date - May 29th.

It appears that the Commission is satisfied with the preparations it has made thus far. Referring to an address given on Thursday last week, Jega argued,

“The summary of my presentation to the Council of State is that INEC is substantially ready to conduct elections.” When quizzed specifically on the low level - just 66.58% - of PVCs that have been distributed nationwide, Jega stated that INEC is, “at comfort level for distribution of resources.”

Military Rules out Guarantee of Security

With INEC arguing that they are ready, the issue given most weight in making the decision was therefore the security of the nation.

The President’s National Security Advisor, Colonel Sambo Dasuki, first raised eyebrows of a security threat when he let slip that he thought the elections could be postponed while speaking at the London think tank - Chatham House - in January.
Anxieties were stoked when it was announced that soldiers will not be able to provide security anywhere in the country if elections hold on Saturday as planned. The claim was revealed in a letter to INEC chairman, again originating from Dasuki.

In the letter, Dasuki said he is “strongly advising” that it will not be possible to hold elections in Adamawa, Yobe, Borno and Gombe States until the military effort in the North East rids the country of Boko Haram insurgents once and for all.

Jega conveyed that the letter he had received advised that he postpone the general elections by at least 6 weeks in the first instance.

Contradictions

On Monday, just five days before the announcement, Nigerian security chiefs declared unanimous confidence that the military was ready to secure the elections as scheduled.

The Chief of Defence Staff, Air Marshal Alex Badeh, reasoned that though the military was partly occupied with the insurgency in the north-east, they had capacity to tame any act of violence before, during and after the election. He said, “We are not directly involved in elections and electioneering but before the elections, we will deploy our personnel across the nation to assist civil powers and authority [...]. The military will deploy as much as we can across the nation. Even though we are busy in the north east, we also have capability across the nation.”

Commenting on the continuing airlift of materials to the Northern States, The Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Adesola Amosun said; “It was logistic problems that made us to postpone the election four years ago, it is not going to happen again, we are already ahead of the game.”

Chief of Army Staff General Kenneth Minimah concluded, “We are prepared to ensure we have a peaceful election.”

Stemming the Insurgency

After consulting with military chiefs once more on Saturday it was finally announced by Jega that; “The security agencies reiterated that they will be concentrating their attention to the insurgency and may not be able to play its traditional role in providing security during the elections.”

The country’s northeast has been in the grip of an Islamist insurgency waged by the Boko Haram terrorist group for nearly six years, with the country’s military unable to contain it. International concern has increased along with the death toll; some 10,000 have been killed in the uprising in the past year compared with 2,000 in the four previous years, according the US Council on Foreign Relations. It was not immediately clear however how that standoff might change in the coming six weeks.

Civil Society Condemns the Decision

The Nigeria Civil Society Election Situation Room - a group of numbering more than sixty CSOs in total - that took part in the consultation with the chairman of INEC and the commissioners, have since condemned the decision made.

They pointed out in a statement following the ruling that the military’s imposition amounted to an abdication of its constitutional duties to provide security to citizens, and to the Commission to enable it to conduct elections, and that it appeared contrived to truncate the democratic process in Nigeria.

The statement raises concerns that the threat is tantamount to blackmailing the Election Management Body away from the constitutional guaranteed function of conducting elections.
The group condemns the security agents for their inability to guarantee the security of citizens, election officials, and materials during the elections. They called for the resignation of military chiefs and security heads, including the Police, on account of their inability to exercise their constitutional responsibility to secure lives and property at all times including during the elections.

Military Trumps Civil Society and Common Sense

In the end it was the military – who themselves are close to the government – that made the decision for the ‘independent’ election body.

Holding an election in the middle of an insurgency is not ideal, but it would not be a novelty either. Despite its own share of insecurity, Afghanistan managed to conduct a credible presidential election last year. So did war-torn Ukraine. Even Isis-infested Iraq organised parliamentary polls in 2014.

Observers are therefore suspicious that there is an underlining reason why the poll has been shifted. As the stories that follow in this news brief will illustrate in stark detail, the arm of the Federal Government can extend to manipulate the running of all internal affairs to ensure the outcome is palatable.

What is more, there are individuals placed at the helm of most key institutions that can be relied upon to perform a duty when the instruction is given. It is not easy to change this culture, particularly in a patrimonial society like Nigeria.

Some fear the next move will be to go after Jega and replace him with someone more pliant. Key allies of the President are already calling for Jega’s removal. Accusations that he is in cahoots with the opposition, and that he has been working with members of the Northern Elders’ Forum to interfere with the distribution of PVCs and dissemination equipment, have already been made.

Right to Vote

Democracy is a system of government that creates an enabling platform for accountability in governance, which can be used to ensure that those in positions of power do not continue to support themselves with a kleptocratic network of loyal cronies that insulate them from outside scrutiny at the expense of the people.

It is therefore important that people pull together in this six week pause to make sure that citizens are able to come out in en mass to protect their constitutional right to vote. If the government pushes for a further extension that exceeds the statutory time limit for elections to be conducted, then it will be in breach of the constitution, violating the fundamental rights of over 68.8 million registered voters in Nigeria, and tantamount to staging a military coup d’état.

Politicians should mirror this renewed effort, and use the six week period to respond to demands of the people to engage in more meaningful policy debate in the public sphere.

“Always vote for principle, though you may vote alone, and you may cherish the sweetest reflection that your vote is never lost”

John Q Adams
Driven by the collapsing global oil prices and dampened investor confidence due to the uncertainty surrounding elections, the Nigerian economy has been in freefall for the last twelve months.

Consequently the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has been pushed to devalue the Naira by over 30 per cent in the last six months.

It will continue to tumble further with the escalating political tensions that the postponement of the elections will bring.

Investor confidence has been rocked, and the amount of money leaving the country indicates they are unsure of keeping their funds in a volatile market. According to Reuters, investors sold Nigerian stocks valued at N846.5 billion ($4.5 billion) last year. This is 65% more than in 2013.

Contractors across the country are reporting that funds are being withheld for projects until the current election period is over, with significant implications for the economy.

The investment bank JP Morgan recently revealed that in the next three to four months it could pull Nigeria off its Government Bond Index (GBI-EM). It is forced to consider this radical move because of a lack of liquidity in Nigeria’s forex and bond markets, which is caused by the decline in revenue from oil and the use of foreign reserve to support the Naira.

If it is removed, it would force funds tracking the Naira it to sell of the country’s bonds from their portfolios, which would cause significant capital outflows. As a result, borrowing costs would increase for the country whose finances have already been thinned by a drastically reduced oil rev.

There is only one way to dispel the current uncertainty that is jeopardising the economic gains made in one of Africa’s fastest growing economies: The Federal Government must focus on ensuring that after this six week interlude the elections are successfully completed.

**INEC ADVISES ELECTORATE TO BRING CAMERAS TO THE POLLS**

To capture any ugly event that may unfold, Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) of Anambra State, Engineer Edwin Nwatarali, has advised voters to take photos of irregularities at polling units. We support this advice, but always remember that your safety is paramount.

If you manage to safely snap an offence or irregularity, retreat and send it to the Niger Delta Watch, either by SMS to 0701 067 9724 or email to election2015@stakeholderdemocracy.org.
With the military arguing that it does not have the capacity to continue fighting the insurgency in the north and provide adequate cover for nationwide voting this weekend, questions arise surrounding the prevailing corruption within government that is draining resources from vital services.

Nowhere is the phenomenon more visible than when the national resource of crude oil is involved. Over the past year, evidence that the national revenue is being as an ATM by politicians continues to accumulate.

The Governor of Edo state recently vented his exasperation over the vast oil revenue owed to the producing states. He was told by officials that it was being used to bring down the price of kerosene, a basic fuel for Nigerians. “But your highness,” he countered, “there is nowhere in your various domains where kerosene is being sold for [only] 50 naira. So in the name of subsidy, large sums of money are being stolen.”

One year ago, then-governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Lamido Sanusi, submitted a memorandum to the Nigerian Senate. The letter pinpointed gaps and illegalities in the oil accounts that left the nation, with a shortfall of about $20 billion over 18 months.

Spending to subsidise kerosene – for which there was no allocation in the federal budget and whose effect was not reflected in retail prices – totalled about $6 billion. When Sanusi directed his examiners to trace the money, he was suspended.

Following his mysterious dismissal, President Jonathan appointed Godwin Emefiele to the role of governor, a man who has previously managed banks that were also reportedly under investigation by Sanusi for their involvement in laundering the missing oil money.

Last year March, the federal government of Nigeria contracted audit firm, PriceWaterHouseCoopers to investigate allegations of financial impropriety within the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, (NNPC) after Former CBN Governor, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi raised an alarm that $20m was missing from the coffers of the NNPC.

The forensic audit conducted by audit firm has indicted the management of the NNPC for various questionable transactions. Part of the recommendations in the audit report includes the Nigerian Petroleum Development Company, NPDC, the upstream subsidy of the NNPC, refund about $1.48billion to the Federation Account for various un-reconciled transactions.

CBN used as ATM

A national bureau of printing and engraving took out a $21-million loan at 22% interest rate to buy equipment supposedly to print ballots for next month’s election. Emefiele is also chairman of the bureau, and the loan came from the bank he used to run. The deal becomes even more suspicious as the bureau did not even have the contract to print the ballots.
Sarah Chayes, Senior Associate of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, reports that a source “close to” a Nigerian bank said his establishment transferred more than $56 million to perceived Jonathan loyalists “outside due process”, primarily to rent campaign supporters. “Some people who were hired to come to the rallies are complaining that they did not receive the money promised them. The politicians want to pocket all of it”, he said.

Meanwhile, after interviews with civil servants, Chayes reports that public procurement invoices submitted to the Federal Government are often grossly inflated to three times their value by those in charge of processing them.

Corruption therefore is endemic throughout the institutions of Nigeria. What is more, it is those in power who install individuals to strategic positions who can be relied on to release or cover up federal funds when needed, who are then rewarded for their loyalty with promotion to the most prominent positions.

Funding the Postponement

With tragic irony, the extension will demand more money to finance the audacious rockstar campaigning of the political parties. With donor funds exhausted, a close eye will need to track the federal accounts to ensure they are not diverted to finance political ends. There are already plenty of reports surfacing of payments to supporters (see: www.nigerdeltawatch.org)

When questions arise on overcoming the insurgency in the north, the service chiefs argue they are overstretched and under resourced. Maybe if the leakages where reduced there would be plenty to fund the national institutions. This includes services in the north to build social safety nets to overcome the poverty that is driving people to extremism.

Moreover, the insurgency started as a protest against the corruption within the government that was seen to favour southerners, so if this can be addressed at source then it will go a long way towards stemming the violence.

OBSERVER STATS: FROM TRANSITION MONITORING GROUP

Multiple TMG observers have directly witnessed the gathering of small arms and light weapons in such states as Jigawa, Kano, Nasarawa and Sokoto.

TMG observers witness campaigning in government vehicles in more than 40 percent of LGAs in the following states: Zamfara (64 percent), Akwa Ibom (61 percent), Abia (47 percent), Ebonyi (46 percent), Delta (44 percent). The use of government property in support of a political campaign is a violation of the electoral code.

22% of observers nationwide reported indirect observations of voters’ cards being sold or bought in their LGAs: a seven percent increase nationally from reporting period one.

Particularly elevated in the North West, with 3 percent of observers directly observing the buying and selling of voters’ cards, and 28 percent indirectly observing such activity.

81% - mass movement of persons away from their LGA in the North East geopolitical zone. In Yobe state, 23 percent of observers saw migration.

The TMG pre-election observation project leverages the presence of one locally recruited TMG election observer in each of the 774 LGAs of Nigeria to gather systematic information about the 2015 pre-electoral environment, including early warning signs of electoral violence. For more information see: tmgng.org
IBO EXODUS FROM THE NORTH

Growing tension in Nigeria is forcing hundreds of individuals from the Igbo ethnic group to migrate away from the north ahead of February 14 polls.

News Wire NGR reports that hundreds of non-indigenes residing in the commercial city of Kano have left the city for their respective place of origin in the South-South and South-Eastern parts of the country for fear of election violence.

Keep small as the quality is poor (Caption) Hundreds have reportedly boarded up and fled south in fear of violence.

The Igbo people were killed in their millions during the civil war and subsequent elections in Nigeria. In 2011, more than 600 Igbos were reported to have been killed during the post-election violence that led to the loss of lives and the destruction of property worth millions of Naira in Northern Nigeria.

JONATHAN OR NOT, NIGER DELTA’LL RESUME MILITANCY THIS YEAR” – ANNKIO BRIGGS

Activist and National convener of the Niger Delta Self Determination Movement (NDSDM), Ms Annkio Briggs, has said that whether President Jonathan gets re-elected or not, the people of the Niger Delta have resolved to embark on agitation for the ownership of oil this year.

“Some of us are going to do it and we are going to do it until we get what we want. Other countries are practicing ownership, we must practice ownership.”

With many focussed on the insurgency in the north, not much attention has been given to the south.

Support to militants under the amnesty program is set to end this year, and it is not clear what provisions have been made to mitigate the negative consequences abandonment could bring.
PDP Candidate Ayo Fayose is accused of orchestrating the rigging of the elections with the President

- Tape implies the President ordered the rigging directly

An alleged recording of a secret meeting that took place the night before the Governorship election in Ekiti State has emerged. The tape confirms what observers have reported, that there was widespread rigging on the day and that the military was instrumental in the process. During the conversation strategies and plans to intimidate voters and perform electoral fraud were discussed in detail.

The gubernatorial election in Ekiti State took place on 21st June 2014. The two main contenders were Ayo Fayose (PDP) and Kayode Fayemi (APC). Fayose was present at the meeting, along with Senator Iyiola Omosore, Brig. General Aliyu Momoh, Senator Musiliu Obanikoro (ex-minister of state for defence), Captait Safir Koli, Hon. AbdulKareem (member of the National Assembly) and Caleb Olubolade – Federal Minister of Police Affairs.

At the meeting, all those present were upset by the failings of the military to execute their plan of intimidation and electoral fraud in line with what was agreed and ordered by the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Chief of Army Staff of the Federation. The tape records those present expressing their disapproval of the job done to date to the Brig. General in charge of operations.

In the tape, a voice suspected to be Obanikoro's, who recently stepped down as Minister for State for Defence, explicitly states he was instructed by President to execute his plan: “I am not here for tea party, am on a special assignment by the President.” It is said that the President himself deployed over 1,000 soldiers to control the polling. He is also witnessed bribing military personnel with the offer of promotion if he carries out the “strategy”: “Look here,” he bellows, “you can’t get promotion without me sitting on top of your military council.

“If I am a happy man tomorrow night, the sky is your limit.”

The PDP candidate Fayose explicitly states he was given assurances by the Chief of Army staff that he would execute this plan, and admits to electoral fraud by copying voting materials provided by INEC. The list of activities mentioned in the tape that the Nigerian military was complicit with the PDP to assist in electoral manipulation is staggering.

It is said that they created a special team, including an army “Strike Force” to harass and detain APC members that had been listed by those organising the rigging. To make sure persons not to be harassed were not detained they were given special identifiable stickers to put on their cars. Military personnel who mistakenly detained PDP members engaged in electoral fraud have been reprimanded.

Fayose Denies Authenticity

After the tape was made public, Fayose was quick to rubbish the accusations. He argues that, “Nigerians should also be reminded of the existence of a technology called speech software, which is good at reproducing the sounds, inflections and intonations of a human voice. There are softwares that can re-create voices and even bring the voices of long-dead notable persons back to life.”

He went on to make accusations of his own, state that the tape was “released by the All Progressives Congress (APC), through its media organ, Sahara Reporters.”

If the tape is genuine, and the claims made by members present true, then it is a clear illustration how desperate the Federal Government is getting. It shows that there is a real fear that the party will lose their seats of power for the first time since 1999.

This would also be applied to the choice to postpone the elections too. The most recent polling by Afrobarometer had the PDP and APC neck and neck leading into the vote, with Buhari carrying the most momentum. Either way, within the six week pause both parties clamouring for power will be intensifying their particular approaches to winning the vote, and probably make use of all tactics available to them.


And hear the full tape here: https://soundcloud.com/saharareporters/secret-meeting-that-led-to-the-rigging-of-ekiti-gubernatorial-for-fa
Across the 2015 elections cycle you can report incidents you observe in your area to SDN.

The SDN network is spread across every LGA across Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers State, and will aim to respond to verified reports of incidents within the shortest possible time. This initial response will be followed by a number of positive steps for resolution where appropriate.

SDN has experience working with communities on tackling election related violence. Our aim is to help communities voice their experiences with the election process, whether good or bad.

There are a number of ways you can send a report:

1. **ONLINE** at www.nigerdeltawatch.org under the ‘Submit a Report’ tab

![Niger Delta Watch - Election 2015](image)

2. **ANDROID** download the ‘Ushahidi’ app and search for the map ‘Niger Delta Watch’

![Ushahidi](image)

3. **TWITTER** to our twitter handle @SDNNigerDelta

4. **EMAIL** to election2015@stakeholderdemocracy.org

5. **SMS** to 0701 067 9724

We will be circulating regular updates on elections and educational materials. Please keep in touch by following [www.stakeholderdemocracy.org](http://www.stakeholderdemocracy.org)