

# FLASHPOINTS: THE 2015 ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

SDN

Issue Eight: 3 Mar 2015

Days to Presidential Poll: 25

Days to Governor and House of Representatives Poll: 39



## BUHARI GIVES TALK AT CHATHAM HOUSE

**All Progressives Congress (APC) Presidential Candidate, General Muhamadu Buhari, spoke before a packed audience at Chatham House in London last week on the prospects of democratic transition in Nigeria, and the African continent as a whole.**

The former military dictator began by reading a rigid pre-prepared speech on the history of democratic transition in African countries, the problems encountered, and the overall importance of democracy.

“It is much more important that the promise of democracy goes beyond just allowing people to freely choose their leaders. It is much more important that democracy should deliver on the promise of choice, of freedoms, of security of lives and property, of transparency and accountability, of rule of law, of good governance and of shared prosperity. It is very important that the promise embedded in

the concept of democracy, the promise of a better life for the generality of the people, is not delivered in the breach.”

After concluding that, “The prospects of democratic consolidation in Africa will be further brightened when that eventually happens in Nigeria,” the floor was opened to questions.

### Dictated Debate

Questions were well responded to both clearly and coherently. Both clarity of questioning and comprehension of response are seldom seen at these types of event.

In addition, the issues of the Niger Delta were omitted – both by Buhari himself and from the participants – with less relevant details being discussed. This was also the case when we asked National Security Advisor, Sambo Dasuki, the man who

postponed the elections, what plans are in place. It is a critical year for the Niger Delta as 2015 also signals the end of the Amnesty period. The absence of a clear strategy for the tens of thousands of militants enrolled is worrying.

### On Corruption

Buhari is notorious amongst Nigerians for his tough stance on corruption. He reaffirmed this for the audience at Chatham House, stating: “Corruption will have no place and the corrupt will not be appointed into my administration.”

Outlining the Party’s stance he announced that, “First and foremost, we will plug the holes in the budgetary process. Revenue producing entities such as NNPC and Customs and Exercise will have one set of books only. Their revenues will be publicly disclosed and regularly audited.”



Governor Amaechi of has been a permanent fixture on the campaign trail with Buhari

His plans are to support state institutions: “The institutions of state dedicated to fighting corruption will be given independence and prosecutorial authority without political interference.”

It is not however clear what he intends to do about allegations against existing politicians in the country. “But I must emphasise that any war waged on corruption should not be misconstrued (sic) as settling old scores or a witch-hunt. I’m running for President to lead Nigeria to prosperity and not adversity.”

One name prominent in discussions of State-level corruption is Governor Rotimi Amaechi of Rivers State. The oil-rich state has a higher income than many African countries, and

the state’s accounts have long been the victim of significant financial leakages. Unable to run again in the state this time, his intimacy with Gen. Buhari hints that he may be

appointed to a senior role in the government. Hopefully the statements of forward-looking approach to corruption are not an attempt to absolve historic and current offenders.

### Disruption

There was a demonstration against Buhari’s campaign for election in front of Chatham House while the event took place, which appeared to be led by the Nigerian diaspora.

Eye-witnesses however allege that the protesters did not understand what they were protesting about, and that the Nigerian reporters covering the event and interviewing protesters was also a stooge. This information supports the allegations that there was a plot to hire people to disrupt the event – but conducted by whom is unclear.



### Platforms for Debate

Whether the talk, questions and protests were staged, Buhari has to be commended for standing on a ‘neutral’ platform - in front of cameras, the press, and the public -to discuss the problems facing the country at an

intellectual level. The lucidity of his presentation was refreshing when up to now he has been presented as an illiterate military General disconnected from the people.

SDN has endeavoured to build these platforms throughout the electoral cycle by bringing community people and representatives together with political aspirants at all levels to discuss the issues affecting them, hear how the politicians intend to tackle the problems, and then critically analysing their suggestions. This two-way dialogue is the cornerstone of democracy.

The reaction of the ruling People’s Democratic Party (PDP) highlights the root reasons why Nigerian politics is currently stalemated, and why Buhari was forced to hold such an event outside of Nigeria. Accusing the APC of paying for the event, paying protesters to picket the event, and rubbishing everything he says as political hogwash is counter-productive.

Instead they should engage his propositions at the same intellectual level, and respond with evidence, wisdom and creative solutions. After all, politics is just a forum for the discussion of ideas and solutions to problems. If they are absent from the debate then there is no debate.

**(Below)** People living with disabilities given the platform to engage with Senatorial aspirants in Port Harcourt recently.



**The Coalition of Ethnic Based Pressure Groups and Human Rights Groups in Rivers State (COEGHAR) on Thursday protested outside the United States Embassy in Lagos, demanding for the US government's intervention in addressing the high level of insecurity in the state.**

They presented a letter of protest titled, 'Re: Protest Against Acts of Politically Motivated Harassment, Intimidation, Orchestrated Violence and Killings in Rivers State of Nigeria,' addressed to the Secretary of State United States of America and signed by the leader of the coalition, Charles Inko-Tariah.

"We note the continued interest of the United States of America in ensuring that nothing will scuttle the democratic system currently in place in Nigeria, and recall with gratitude your recent visit to Nigeria which precipitated the signing of a non-violence pact by the presidential candidates of the two leading political parties in Nigeria, being the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC).

"We also recall the move by the American Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr James Entwistle, who brokered a local peace pact in Rivers State among the leadership of the APC, PDP and Labour Parties."

"It is rather unfortunate that



## PROTESTS AT US EMBASSY OVER ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE IN RIVERS STATE

instead of the above stated peace pacts achieving the aims for which they were signed, what we are currently witnessing is that Rivers State has been placed under siege and is daily being consumed by mindless violence which has resulted in the deaths of several innocent souls.

"We particularly note that deaths have occurred in Abua/Odual LGA; Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni LGA and Okrika LGA all in Rivers State,"

"Of equal importance is the fact that all these are happening

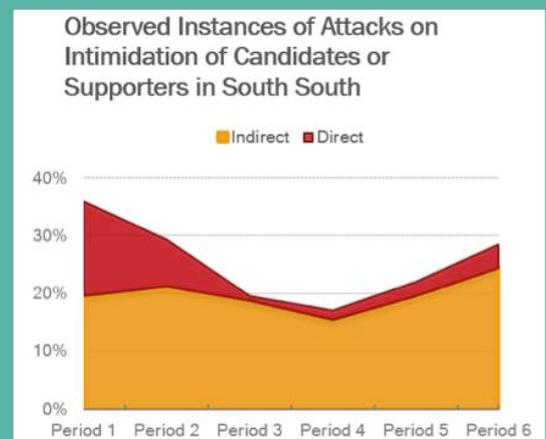
in the midst of uncertainty surrounding the judiciary in the state which has remained shut down and bogged down by a seemingly unending strike action embarked upon by Judicial Staff Union of Nigeria, JUSUN, Rivers State branch."

A NHRC report issued two weeks ago calculated that after Lagos, Rivers State is said to face the greatest risk of "significant violence during the 2015 elections".

### LATEST REPORTING FROM NATIONAL OBSERVERS - SIXTH REPORTING PERIOD

- Increasingly volatile campaign environment with observers reporting attacks on or intimidation of candidates in greater percentages of LGAs in North West Nigeria over time,
- Increased destruction of candidate property nation-wide
- Greater numbers of candidates nation-wide encouraging their supporters to commit violence.
- +2% Increase of LGAs reporting candidates inciting supporters to commit violence in South-South Zone
- +5% increase of LGAs reporting destruction of candidate and supporters' property in South-South Zone.
- Rivers State - 47% of LGA's reported attacks or intimidation of candidates and supporters - 4th highest rate in the Federation.

For the full report visit [www.tmgng.org](http://www.tmgng.org)



**Transition Monitoring Group**



## MILITARY OPERATIONS FORCE BOKO HARAM BACK TO URBAN WARFARE

**At least 86 people were killed in explosions blamed on Boko Haram last week alone, all of them at crowded bus stations. This news comes amidst claims by the Federal Government that they are making significant victories against the group.**

Mark Schroeder, from political and security risk analysts Stratfor, said the recent bombings in Kano – the North’s biggest city – and the central city of Jos, raised a new security threat.

“The Nigerian military, with renewed government backing, may achieve the easy steps of a counter-insurgency of asserting control in remote urban areas of the northeast”

Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau vowed in a recent video that the elections, now scheduled for March 28, “will not be held, even if we are dead”.

Schroeder argues that, “Boko Haram is merely being displaced while the Nigerian government publicises gains in Baga and elsewhere.”

### Stoking Fear

A teenage girl has been brutally beaten to death in north-east city of Bauchi after crowd at market reportedly find two bottles strapped to her body. Another girl with her was arrested.

It seems doubtful the girl was actually a bomber, said

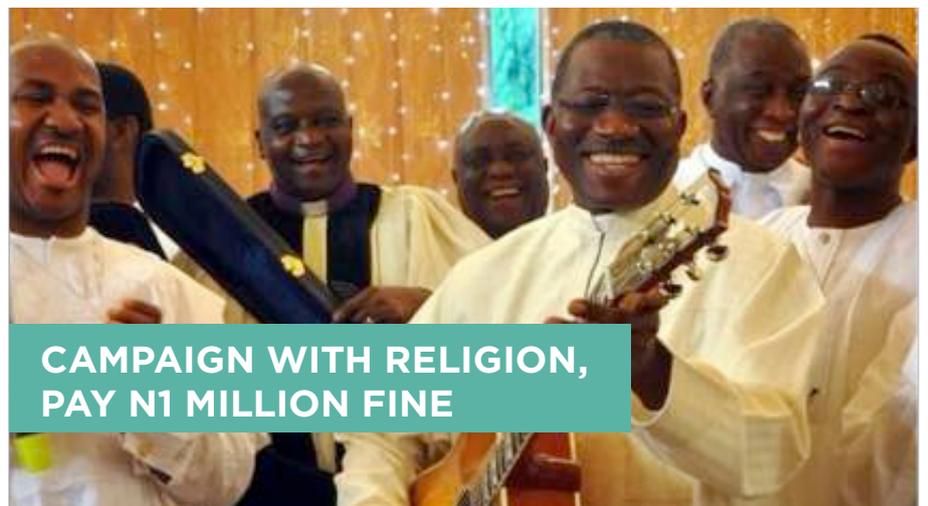
police deputy superintendent Muhammad Haruna. He said she was the victim of mob action carried out by an “irate crowd”.

This follows a wider trend of vigilante groups and hysteria that are filling the vacuum left by inadequate security provisions.

With the threat that the insurgency may take root in urban settings, with opportunity for more recruitment and more devastating attacks on concentrated populations, citizens are worried what may happen on polling day.

**The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has warned that any political party or politician who used religious sentiments for their campaigns would be made to pay N1 million fine or face 12 months imprisonment.**

The issue of widespread religious sentiments in campaigning has been covered previously in Flashpoints. The new rule from INEC appears not to have had any immediate effect, as party political adverts are still being broadcast on national television networks declaring “Goodluck is President by the Grace of God”.



## CAMPAIGN WITH RELIGION, PAY N1 MILLION FINE

## IN FOCUS: SERVICE DISRUPTION THREATENING ELECTION PREPARATIONS



The National Union of Allied Health Professionals (NUAHP) have been on strike since 2014

**There are threats of nationwide action across the state service departments of health, security and education due to deteriorating working conditions and withdrawn salaries.**

The Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) had threatened to embark on an indefinite strike due to incessant kidnapping of their colleagues in Rivers State.

Rivers State Chairman of the NMA, Furo Green, told newsmen government, security agencies and the general public had not lived up to expectation in condemning the attacks on doctors.

The statement came following the news that the body of Dr. John Okpara - abducted from his private hospital at D-Line in Port Harcourt two weeks ago - was found dumped at a cassava farm in Borokiri area of Port Harcourt on Tuesday.

“Within the last 6 days, four doctors have been attacked in Port Harcourt. Three of them were severely injured and tortured but the last of them Dr. Opara was murdered by his captors and his body dumped at a cassava farm in the Borikiri axis of Port Harcourt,” Dr Green announced.

“We are deeply pained and we wonder if this is the way the society should treat loved ones. It is very unfortunate that the

people we labour to serve are the same people who are trying to annihilate us.

As I speak with you, four other doctors have been threatened by SMS. We have taken our fates in our hands. We shall no longer guarantee the availability of doctors to attend to their clients,” Dr Green concluded.

Barely 24-hours after the threat of strike, another doctor, Azubike Okara was kidnapped while on duty at the Emohua General Hospital, in Port-Harcourt, Rivers State.

“Gunmen stormed the Hospital, shot two doctors who were with him and took him away. I think this is the height of it,” confirmed Chief Medical Director of the Rivers State Hospitals Management Board, Dr. O.N. Iragunimah.

The mass strike by doctors in Rivers State would be devastating at a time when violent attacks are on the rise and predicted to peak after elections.

The call to action follows shortly after the nationwide strike of health workers under the Joint Health Sector Unions (JOHESU) and National Union of Allied Health Professionals (NUAPH) over non-payment of wages and lack of representation in decision-making. The action has momentarily been suspended for negotiations after more than 4 months of action.



### The Mother of All Strikes

Reports emerged that policemen are also threatening to go on strike over unpaid salaries and the state of welfare programmes.

“We reject the insensitivity to our plight as Nigerians,” a statement from the National Union of Policemen (NUP) read, adding: “A nationwide mobilisation is on course and it shall be the mother of all strikes”

“Our people are the poorest of the poor,” the statement continues, “They are made to buy their own uniforms, buy stationery at police stations while the economic living conditions in the police barracks are worse than that of pigs.”

“No reasonable country will allow this condition to continue unchecked. Nigerian policemen and women are the most maltreated and dehumanised of all the police institutions in the world, while the top rating of the police hierarchy remain the most corrupt,” it added.

The angry policemen who also expressed dissatisfaction that a significant number of their retired colleagues have received neither gratuity nor pension, threatened to embark on the planned strike starting on the 28th of March, same day the rescheduled presidential election will hold. With the increasing call for an end to the deployment of the military for election purposes, a strike by the police coinciding with the election will either mean an increased military presence throughout the polling – or further postponement of the election.

Inspector General of Police, Suleiman Abba, vowed to unleash his powers on any officer or group of policemen who embark on strike.

Meanwhile, Abia, Benue, Plateau, Bauchi and Kogi states have reportedly withheld payment of primary school teachers’ salaries since April 2014.

### Courts Suspend

The Judiciary Staff Union of Nigeria (JUSUN) embarked on indefinite nationwide strike on January 2 2014 following refusal of funding requests.

On January 25 2015, over one year later, it was forced to suspend its strike in all Federal Courts, the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal and National Industrial Court (NIC) due to the political situation in the country.

Barely 48 hours after, unknown persons bombed three separate High Courts in Degema, Isiokpo and Port Harcourt areas of Rivers State. Investigations into motive are ongoing.

### Right to Strike

Nigeria’s labour law introduced an anti-strike clause in 2008, which restricts workers on essential services from going on strike. It was condemned at the time as weakening to Nigerian Labour Congress and for infringing fundamental human rights.

According to the International Confederation of Free Trade



Unions (ICFTU), the Trade Union Amendment Act, “fails to address adequately problems identified in the report with regard to freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, the right to strike and anti-union policies.”

Furthermore, strikes are prohibited in Export Processing Zones for a period of ten years, which is directly contrary to International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions.

The Public Order Act compels organisations to seek a

permit from the Police before any assembly, giving the Commissioners of Police latitude to refuse to issue such a permit or to break up assemblies convened without one.

As such permits are invariably denied, the ICFTU argues that right to assembly provided for by the Nigerian Constitution and the right to freedom of association cannot be meaningful as long as this law still exists.



The Nigerian judiciary has been on strike for one year

## Destabilising Democracy

The right to strike is tantamount to freedom of expression and the right to vote. It has great influence on the balance of relations, not only between employers and employees and their organisations in the various sectors of the economy, but also the capacity of the civil society -which includes trade unions - in acting as a counter power to likely excesses that the state may display in the governance process.

Thus the right to strike determines not just the prospects for enjoying improvements in working and living conditions of employees, but it is also a precondition for the sustenance of society on a just and democratic basis and enjoyment of other fundamental socio-economic and political rights.

Pending strikes across all areas of state services are like the Sword of Damocles hanging by a single hair. It is unclear whether

they have been orchestrated to show the king's power over the people as negotiator, or are an accumulation of failures to address individual problems.

But as the focus on the transition to democracy in Nigeria is squarely on the collection of voter cards and security in the north, there is a danger that the most meaningful pillars of democracy are being subsumed.

## CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION DEMAND PROBE OF EKITI RIGGING ALLEGATIONS

Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Thursday called on politicians across Nigeria to close ranks in protecting and defending the credibility of the country's electoral system.

Allegations concerning the role of certain senior political and military personnel in last year's Ekiti Governorship Elections have taken momentum over the last few weeks, but have received no serious attention by the authorities.

"The allegations concerning the role of certain senior political and military personnel in the Ekiti Governorship Election are serious and it is in the interest of the credibility of Nigeria's election system and of all persons and institutions associated with these allegations that there should be a credible, independent and impartial investigation of these allegations without further delay," a joint communique read.

"Complementarily, they also stressed the need to preserve

the independence, neutrality and impartiality of all security and law enforcement units deployed on election duty, including the responsibility to be impartial and respect the human rights of all voters, election administrators and agents."

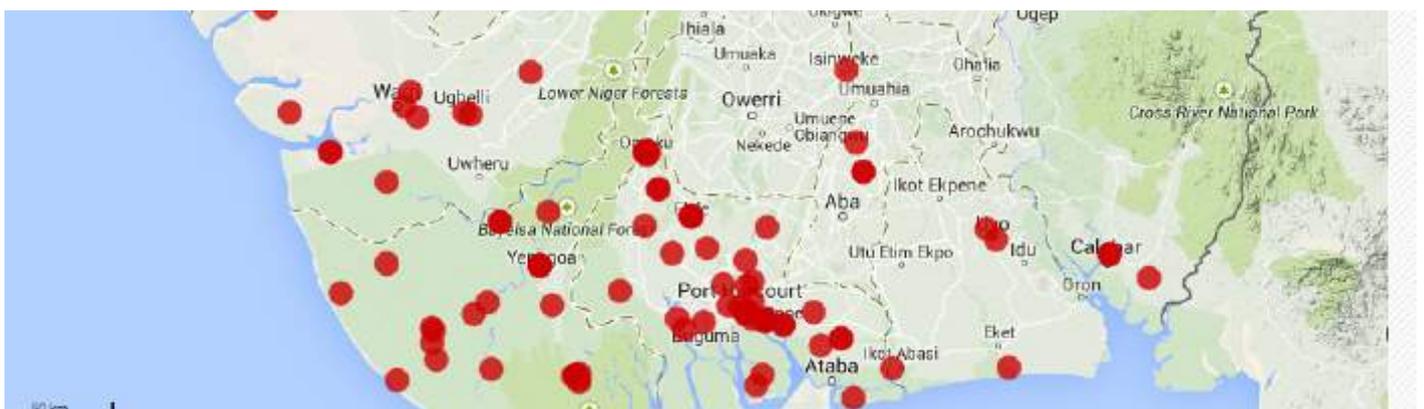
For a full discussion of the details and implications of the allegations, see previous issues of Flashpoints.

## NIGER DELTA WATCH:

The Niger Delta Watch ([www.nigerdeltawatch.org](http://www.nigerdeltawatch.org)) is designed to receive reports from citizens across the Niger Delta relating to violence, conflict and election irregularities.

Reports can be submitted on any issue - from Permanent Voter Card (PVC) distribution irregularities, to intimidation and attacks at political events. You can also explore all the reports submitted.

Anybody can submit a report by filling out an online form, and also by SMS, email, and twitter.



# FOR ELECTION UPDATES AND TO REPORT YOUR PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS, STAY IN TOUCH WITH SDN

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](http://www.nigerdeltawatch.org) under the 'Submit a Report' tab



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



3. **TWITTER** to our twitter handle @SDNNigerDelta
4. **EMAIL** to [election2015@stakeholderdemocracy.org](mailto: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)