

Press Release

Observations on the Parliamentary Elections in Nigeria

The Foundation for Good Governance in Nigeria (FGGN) has been closely monitoring the Nigerian elections, which began with parliamentary elections last Saturday, 12 April 2003.

Although the elections have been conducted under a relative violence-free environment in some parts of the country, giving an impression of free and fair conduct, the Independent National Election Commission (INEC), in apparent collaboration with the ruling party (PDP), appeared to have devised a series of new unsophisticated election malpractices. These malpractices range from deliberately providing inadequate voting materials, equipment and personnel, delaying voting time by hours, and worse of all, outright reversals of previously reported results where it did not favour the PDP.

What opposition parties and the electorate have feared all along throughout the electioneering campaign seemed to have reared its ugly head. The initial euphoria and jubilation by all progressive elements in the country and beyond, when early results were announced, citizens who are yearning for change and a responsive government to reverse the downward spiral the country is currently going through, seemed to be short lived. A crude form of results mutilation has replaced the early attempt of civilized behaviour displayed by INEC.

If this were a rehearsal of what would follow next Saturday 19 April at the governorship and presidential elections, INEC would have completely lost what is left of its independence and should hold itself responsible for any violent consequences that may result. The consequences of such an abuse of democracy and human rights cannot be predicted with any degree of certainty.

However, FGGN is cautiously optimistic and encouraged by the historic successes achieved by the main opposition party, All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) of Muhammadu Buhari, who is well known for his discipline, transparency, accountability, and trustworthiness. The ANPP has swept through the PDP strongholds and this has shocked the chieftains of the incumbent party.

The loud and clear statement by the electorate, especially in the northern part of the country against the PDP, sent a shockwave down the spine of the ruling party and is a clear indication that the majority of Nigerians are utterly disappointed with the current PDP government, and are now clamoring for good governance.

As the initial results rattled the ruling party, PDP stalwarts were reported to have started interfering with the electoral outcomes. There were cases all over the country where original results in favour of the ANPP and other opposition parties candidates have been altered by INEC returning officers in connivance with the ruling party. Just to mention a couple, early results declared in Adamawa State, the home state of the serving Vice President, Abubakar Atiku, indicated that the ruling party woefully failed. This has since been reversed in favour of the PDP. Again, the serving deputy Senate President has earlier been reported to lose his seat in Plateau State. This has also since been reversed.

The FGGN is deeply concerned with this development and is currently investigating the situation. Meanwhile, the FGGN calls on INEC to desist from being used as instruments for creating national instability. The credibility of INEC and its officials as well as the entire election process may be at

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stake unless INEC officials are seen to be totally impartial and independent.

The FGGN also calls on INEC to release election results immediately after ballot papers have been counted, and transmitting the same to INEC headquarters, as delaying the results allows room for manoeuvre. The FGGN wishes to commend INEC for posting election results on its website. However, we have observed some inconsistencies between the results posted on INEC's website and those declared at INEC headquarters. For instance, today (14th April 2003) INEC stated on its website that of the 2 senatorial district results declared so far from Gombe State, 1 was reported to have been won by the PDP and 1 by APGA even though APGA has no senatorial candidate in Gombe State! The FGGN hopes that these discrepancies did not come as a result of manipulation by INEC officials as falsehood manifests itself as discrepancies. The FGGN urges INEC to look into and rectify the situation urgently.

The FGGN calls on Domestic and the International observers to be vigilant and to make their presence and influence to bring about the declaration of the actual results as decided by the electorate, not those dictated by the incumbent government. The observers should particularly intensify their efforts in bringing about a free and fair conduct of the remaining elections and that the counting and declaration of results should reflect the actual will of the electorate.

The FGGN also calls on Nigerians of good conscience to come out en masse next week to vote for good governance to usher in a new era of purposeful and disciplined leadership, security, transparency, accountability, prosperity, and sustainable growth and development which Nigerians have been denied for so long. The FGGN, therefore, urges Nigerians to come out and vote massively for Muhammadu Buhari/Chuba Okadigbo candidature and to make sure they

guard their votes until the final declaration of the results.

Long Live the Federal Republic of Nigeria!

Long Live the Foundation for Good Governance and Development in Nigeria!!

For and on behalf of *the Foundation*:

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