

PRESS RELEASE

INEC SHOULD BE AN IMPARTIAL REFEREE

The 2007 election is a watershed for Nigeria. It is an opportunity for Nigerians to choose their leaders for the next four years that will determine whether Nigeria will join other nations in marching forward in development or continue to slide backwards towards underdevelopment and anarchy.

The Independent National Electoral Commission has a great role to play in determining the direction the country takes in 2007. It is expected to provide registration for all eligible voters and organise a credible, free and fair election as an impartial referee. The way the voter registration was conducted is a matter of great concern for patriotic Nigerians all over the world. The insistence of INEC to conduct voters' registration using the electronic system was a failure, as millions of Nigerians willing to exercise their franchise have not been registered. There are situations where in some communities, registration officials were nowhere to be found and sometimes these officials demanded fees before registering eligible voters. Many eligible voters remained unregistered throughout the registration exercise. The question that arises therefore is "does INEC have the will to sincerely organise a free and fair election in 2007?"

INEC is suppose to be an impartial referee in the conduct of elections but going by the experience of the elections of 2003 we know INEC has been anything but an impartial referee. INEC under the supervision of Abel Goubadia with the active connivance of the police under Tafa Balogun conducted the most rigged elections ever in the history of Nigeria. The current constitutional crisis in the country is a fall out from a rigged election. The current chairman of INEC, Prof Iwu stated after taking over from Goubadia that the 2003 elections were neither free nor fair and promised Nigerians a better election come 2007. The signs on the ground so far have been unsettling, raising doubts regarding the sincerity and will of INEC to conduct a free and fair election under its current leadership. The role that INEC seems to be taking in the process of clearing and registering candidates for the 2007

elections raises many questions as to INEC's independence and impartiality. The electoral commission so far appears to be a tool being used by Obasanjo and the PDP to perfect their rigging agenda while impressing on the international community that credible elections will be conducted.

Some Nigerians still feel no need to register or vote as they strongly believe that their votes would count to nothing. They feel the results of the elections have been pre determined by the government in power. Prof Iwu must take concrete steps now towards conducting a credible, free and fair election by genuinely showing the will to do so, starting with the displaying of voters' register, so as to regain the confidence of the Nigerian people. He should equally be fair to all candidates and political parties in screening process and the conduct of the 2007 elections. Professor Iwu must do his utmost to conduct a credible, free and fair election. He must ensure that the final results broadcast must tally with the signed results of the party agents and INEC officials at polling and collating centres.

Democracy is all about the peoples' right to determine their destiny by freely choosing their leaders. INEC more than any other individual or organisation is in a position to determine which direction our country takes in the 21st century. Prof Iwu and his staff have a date with history and we urge them to take the path of honour in conducting a free and fair election as impartial referees in 2007 for the sake of Nigerians yet unborn. The world is watching.

We call on all well meaning Nigerians to rise up and register, vote and protect their votes to save democracy and the future of Nigeria.

*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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