



The Electoral Hub Statement on the 2023 Presidential Election Tribunalcalls for an Open Judicial Process and electoral justice for Nigerians

Successive elections in Nigeria have been widely characterized by contestations and the effort towards their amicable resolution through the judiciary. Events in the aftermath of the 2023 general election, held February 25 and March 18, 2023 across the country allude to this. The election, albeit lauded for attempts towards improving transparency, produced results that sparked contestations and grievances amongst contestants, citizens, civil society actors and other critical stakeholders in the country. In response, four (4) of the eighteen (18) political parties (and their candidates) that partook in the 2023 general presidential elections turned to the judiciary for resolution of disputes. The National Judicial Council (NJC) under the leadership of the Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN) Olukayode Ariwoola had constituted a total of 257 Judges to hear petitions arising from the 2023 general election¹.

Monday May 8, 2023, marks the onset of proceedings for the 2023 election petition tribunals. Interlocutors, political commentators, and historical antecedents have widely reiterated the importance of election judicial process in the country's democracy. As previous experiences have shown, tribunal rulings could either nullify the election or uphold the results of the polls by dismissing petitions, making it almost as important as the voting process itself. It is, therefore, important that the judicial process in the election tribunals is conducted in conformity with extant provisions to produce just outcomes. This points to two critical issues which stakeholders must not lose sight of as the judicial process proceeds:

- The need for compliance with extant legislations guiding the process, and
- The need for an 'unbiased' and open judiciary.

Recognizing the above and in line with The Electoral Hub's commitment to promoting electoral knowledge, accountability, and electoral integrity, we call on all stakeholders to discharge their duties conscientiously and conform with the rule of law. The Electoral Hub specifically call on the judicial panelists, political parties and their candidates, civil society actors and organisations, and the general public to take steps towards ensuring the credibility of the election judicial process. Our expectations at The Electoral Hub include the following:

¹ <https://dailypost.ng/2023/04/25/nigeria-elections-full-list-of-257-judges-to-hear-petitions/>,
<https://saharareporters.com/2023/03/29/full-list-judges-nominated-resolve-disputes-arising-2023-general-elections>

Judicial Panel

- Adhere to the ethics of the Bench and legal profession, by acting in compliance with guiding principles of the Bench, display neutrality and uphold principles of the rule of law.
- Comply with legal frameworks guiding the election adjudication at all times.
- Avoid all actions that may be perceived as unfair and biased. Justice should not only be done but also seen to be done

Political Parties and Candidates

- Avoid inciteful comments that could heat up the polity, ignite violence and threaten lives and properties.
- Respect the laws guiding the process
- Be willing to accept the outcome of the process

Civil Society Organizations

- Engage judicial, political, and electoral stakeholders to ensure compliance with relevant legal frameworks
- Monitor the process to ensure fairness and openness through sustained advocacy or other best practices
- Support the process with research and information about best practices
- Create awareness by disseminating relevant information
- Curb misinformation and fakenews about the process through factchecking and sharing correct information

Media

- Monitor the process and provide accurate reportage of proceedings
- Create awareness and educate the public
- Ensure fairness and openness of the process through sustained media advocacy
- Collaborate with CSOs in curbing misinformation and fakenews about the process

Citizens

- Discharge their civic responsibility by closely following the process and engaging issues with patriotism
- Demand for accountability and transparency from actors and institutions involved in the 2023 electoral judicial process
- Engage stakeholders to ensure compliance with relevant legal frameworks
- Ensure good conduct while exercising active citizenship as Nigerians

In conclusion, as the tribunal proceedings continue, we urge the Judges to uphold values of neutrality and fairness. We also demand that the Election Tribunal process be made public to ensure transparency and openness as this would enhance fairness and credibility. We also urge the media, and other civil society actors to disseminate the right information by deploying fact-checking tools to prevent misinforming the general public. Ultimately, the Election Tribunal is not only important for its role in determining the final outcome of the 2023 general elections, but could also revive public trust in the Nigerian democracy.

#2023PEPT/C #Post2023GeneralElection
#MonitoringTheJudiciary #ElectoralJustice4Nigerians
#OpenJudiciary #CitizensRights
#2023ElectionTribunal
#ElectionJudicialIntegrity2023

Signed

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