



INITIATIVE FOR RESEARCH,
INNOVATION AND ADVOCACY
IN DEVELOPMENT



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PRE-ELECTION STATEMENT FOR ONDO GOVERNORSHIP ELECTION

As we prepare for the Ondo State Governorship Election, The Electoral Hub urges all stakeholders: political parties, candidates, CSOs, and voters to collectively commit to a peaceful process. We call on all stakeholders and good people of Ondo State to protect and safeguard the integrity of the election. Let's learn from past experiences and work towards an outcome that truly represents the will of the people of Ondo State.

**Omo Olula meji, Omu s'èye Akure Oloyemekun
Omo Akoko elewe obi Ilaje Ayemafuye, awaye
Oma lowo Owo made**

As we go out to vote tomorrow November 16, 2024 for the Ondo State Governorship Election, The Electoral Hub remains committed to promoting electoral knowledge, accountability, and integrity. This election represents a critical juncture in our democratic journey, and it is essential to reflect on the recent Edo State election while setting clear expectations for the upcoming Ondo election.

The Edo State governorship election held on September 21, 2024, showcased both the strengths and weaknesses of our electoral process. One of the most encouraging outcomes was the functionality of the Bi-Modal Voters Accreditation System (BVA S) and INEC Result Viewing Portal (IReV) which allowed for a seamless voting process as well as real-time monitoring of election results. Additionally, the election highlighted an increase in voter awareness and engagement. Many citizens took to social media and community forums to discuss candidates and issues, indicating a growing interest in political participation and awareness. However, the Edo election was not without its challenges. Reports of irregularities and allegations of electoral misconduct raised concerns about the integrity of the electoral process. These issues must be addressed to restore public confidence in our democratic institutions.

Furthermore, the lack of transparency in the collation process led to skepticism among voters regarding the legitimacy of results. This reveals the need for enhanced monitoring and reporting mechanisms. Instances of violence and intimidation during the election raised alarms about voters' safety, emphasizing the need for improved security measures in future elections.

We express concerns over the recent harassments of the Ondo State Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC), Mrs. Oluwatoyin Babalola. There are allegations questioning her impartiality due to her supposed ties to Ondo State. While INEC has firmly stated that Mrs. Babalola is not from Ondo State and that it is against their policy to deploy RECs to their states of origin, we urge all stakeholders to refrain from making unsubstantiated allegations that could undermine public confidence in the electoral process. Instead, any legitimate concerns should be addressed through appropriate legal and administrative channels. The focus must remain on issue-based discussions rather than personal attacks on election officials.

As one of the accredited observers for the election, The Electoral Hub would monitor the electoral process and observe pre-election, election-day, and post-election activities with a

focus on electoral accountability framework. The electoral accountability framework is anchored is rooted in the understanding that effective electoral governance alone does not guarantee good elections, because a “complex variety of social, economic and political variables affect the process, integrity, and outcome of democratic elections”¹. Meaning that elections are multifaceted, complex, and encompassing both socio-political and administrative dimensions. Therefore, while the electoral management body (EMB) plays a crucial role, the responsibility for ensuring the credibility and integrity of elections extends to various key stakeholders and institutions of the electoral process and governance. These include the legislature, executive, judiciary, political parties, candidates, security agencies, voters, CSOs, and the media. Each of these stakeholders contribute significantly to shaping the integrity and quality of electoral governance, electoral processes and elections.

The Electoral Hub Expectations for the Ondo State Election

As we focus to the Ondo State governorship election, The Electoral Hub has outlined several key expectations that we believe are crucial for ensuring successful and quality electoral process.

- **Upholding Electoral Integrity:** The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) must prioritize integrity and transparency throughout the electoral process. Improving the implementation of its monitoring systems that allow for real-time reporting of any irregularities or concerns is essential. INEC should actively engage with civil society organizations to promote transparency and accountability in all electoral activities. Ad-hoc staff must operate transparently, adhering strictly to electoral guidelines while treating voters with respect and dignity. Accountability is paramount; any misconduct should be investigated promptly to maintain public trust.
- **Ensuring Security:** A peaceful electoral environment is essential for a successful election. Law enforcement agencies must maintain neutrality and protect voters from intimidation or violence before, during, and after the election period.
- **Adherence to Electoral Laws:** Political parties and candidates must diligently adhere to the provisions of the Electoral Act and other Laws, Rules and Regulations on Elections, ensuring a fair and transparent electoral process. A key provision, outlined in Section 94 of the Electoral Act 2022, explicitly prohibits any campaign activities by political parties within twenty-four hours leading up to the election. This regulation marks the official conclusion of campaigns, emphasizing the importance of maintaining integrity and respect for the electoral timeline.

¹Mozaffar, S. and Andreas Schedler, A. (2002). "The Comparative Study of Electoral Governance-Introduction". *International Political Science Review* (2002), Vol 23(1): 5-27. Page 6

- **Post-Election Accountability:** Regardless of who emerges victorious, it is vital for the winning candidate to prioritize unity and inclusivity. The new administration should actively seek input from diverse groups within society, ensuring that governance reflects the will of all citizens. Prioritizing policies that promote economic growth, education, healthcare, and infrastructural development will address the needs of all constituents.
- **Issue-Based Campaigns:** Candidates in the Election should demonstrate extensive knowledge and understanding of existential challenges that plague the state, and clearly debate ways to tackle them if elected. The substance of issue-based campaign is that Candidates authentically canvass their Manifesto based on societal and governance issues, as it is through this that the Electorates can make informed choices.
- **Free And Fair Election:** The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) should see to delivering a transparent and credible election that is free from all forms of violence and intimidation, and it should be non-partisan in its conduct. Voters must exercise their right to vote without any restraint or fear.
- **Will Of the Voters:** Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, ratified in Nigeria in 1985 states that “the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government”. In the same light, section 38(1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria provides for freedom of expression as a fundamental Human Right. Therefore, we can say that the will of the Voters is rooted in the social contract theory. The outcome of the Election results should clearly reflect the will of the Voters. The bedrock of Democracy is an election that mirrors the choice of the Voters. On this note, Election Observers should be given unimpeded access and protection in the Election.
- **Participation;** We anticipate that Electorates come out in their numbers to exercise their franchise on the election day. Elections are an opportunity for citizens to choose their leaders. The Electorates are required to make informed decision based on what the Candidates campaigned in their manifesto.

In conclusion, as we prepare for the Ondo State Governorship Election, The Electoral Hub urges all stakeholders, political parties, candidates, civil society organizations, and voters to collectively commit to a process that promotes electoral integrity and democracy. By learning from past elections, we can work towards an outcome that truly represents the will of the people of Ondo State.

*#OndoElection2024 #OndoYourVoteYourPower #OndoYourVoteYourFuture #InclusiveElection
#ElectoralAccountabilityMatters #ElectoralIntegrityNG*

Signed

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ABOUT THE ELECTORAL HUB

The Electoral Hub is an interdisciplinary knowledge, policy and advocacy centre promoting electoral knowledge, accountability and integrity. We are committed to providing solutions to improve the credibility and integrity of the electoral process and governance. Our mission is to strengthen electoral governance in Nigeria through the provision of data, critical and contextualized analysis. We believe that the integrity of the electoral process is crucial in improving electoral governance and sustaining democracy in Nigeria. We also believe in solutions rooted in the principles of justice and equity. Our vision is to be an electoral knowledge and innovation one-stop-shop for sustainable democracy. Our values are knowledge-exchange, inclusion, justice, equity, transparency and accountability.

The Electoral Hub, an affiliate of the Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD),

Knowledge| Innovation | Inclusion|

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...promoting electoral knowledge, accountability, and integrity