



# ELECTION 2027 CAN INEC CHAIRMAN, AMUPITAN BE TRUSTED TO DELIVER?

**W**hether Professor Joash Amupitan, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) chairman appointed in October 2025, can be trusted is a subject of intense debate in Nigeria, with views divided along political and religious lines as of early 2026. There has been serious overview, agitations and argument surrounding his credibility since his appointment and these cut across his personal integrity, reputation, religious and partisanship. The appointment of Prof. Joash Ojo Amupitan, as Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) of recent has sparked a wave of debate, especially among those concerned about the political dynamics leading up to Nigeria's 2027 general elections. For some observers, the controversy is not merely about his



bias in the conduct of his duties. Since we are living in a country where elections are tense, where religion and politics are deeply intertwined, and where trust in institutions is fragile, perception can be as powerful as reality. Ultimately, the debate surrounding Prof. Amupitan's appointment reveals a broader national issue: Nigeria's persistent struggle to build institutions that are not only impartial, but universally seen as impartial. Whether or not the fears about the INEC chairman are justified, they highlight the need for transparency, communication, and confidence-building measures as the 2027 elections approach. In the end, Nigeria requires an electoral umpire that inspires confidence across party lines, across regions, and across religious divides. Any doubts reasonable or not must be addressed openly to preserve the integrity of the nation's democratic process

Meanwhile the Supreme Council for Shari'ah in Nigeria (SCSN) has renewed its call for the immediate

academic credentials or administrative capability, but about perceived sentiments he has previously expressed on religious issues in Nigeria. Those who raise these concerns often point to portions of Prof. Amupitan's past legal writings that address violence against Christian communities in Nigeria, leading up to classification of Nigeria as a country where there is a Christian genocide. Critics interpret aspects of those writings as reflecting a bias against the Muslim population, a perception that now fuels doubts about his neutrality as the head of Nigeria's most important electoral institution. These fears intensify when placed within the context of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) and its expected 2027 presidential ticket.

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and Vice President Kashim Shettima—both Muslims—are widely assumed to be the party's candidates once again. For those who believe Prof. Amupitan holds anti-Muslim sentiments, the concern is that he may be inherently uncomfortable with a Muslim-Muslim presidential ticket and could, even if unintentionally, approach the electoral process with bias. From this perspective, some worry that his role as INEC chairman could influence the political atmosphere in ways that undermine the APC's chances or cast doubt on the credibility of the electoral process. Critics argue that the head of INEC must be someone whose public record contains no suggestion, fair or unfair, of hostility toward any religious or political group. However, it is important to emphasize that these concerns remain genuine as there are concrete reasons that Prof. Amupitan would act with

removal of the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Joash Amupitan, ahead of the 2027 general elections. The Council insisted that his continued stay in office posed a serious threat to the credibility of the country's democratic process, describing him as a threat to the credibility of Nigeria's democratic process. It further warned that Muslims would neither recognize nor legitimize any election conducted under Amupitan's leadership, citing what it described as serious integrity and neutrality concerns. The President of the Supreme Council for Shari'ah in Nigeria, Sheikh Bashir Umar, made the position known during the Council's 2026 Annual Pre-Ramadan Lecture and General Assembly in Abuja, themed "Nigeria's Future: Faith, Justice, and Leadership." Umar said the Council's stance was based on what it described as the INEC chairman's questionable antecedents, particularly a legal brief he allegedly authored suggesting the existence of a Christian genocide in Nigeria — a claim the Federal Government has repeatedly dismissed. "This is not the first time the Council is taking this position," Umar said. "In a legal brief he personally sent, he sought to establish the existence of a Christian genocide in Nigeria, a position that is directly at odds with the official stance of the Federal Government, which has categorically stated that no such genocide exists." According to him, the position taken by the INEC chairman amounted to divisive propaganda and raised serious doubts about his impartiality as the head of Nigeria's electoral body. "For

an umpire in a democratic process, integrity and neutrality are non-negotiable,” Umar stated. “As far as we are concerned, his integrity has been compromised.

The honourable thing is for him to resign. If he does not, the government should dismiss or retire him.” Asked whether the Council intended to seek legal redress, Umar said the SCSN was an advocacy body and not directly involved in litigation, but noted that other groups had already approached courts to challenge Amupitan's appointment and continued stay in office. “The Ummah will not recognize or legitimize any election presided over by a character with questionable integrity,” he added. “Democratic credibility must never be compromised.” Beyond the electoral issue, the Council also expressed concerns over worsening insecurity, economic hardship, poor budget implementation, alleged imbalance in federal appointments, and what it described as attempts to undermine Muslims' constitutional right to practice Shari'ah in Muslim-majority states. The SCSN further rejected narratives of a Christian genocide in Nigeria, warning that such claims fuel division and threaten national cohesion.

In a swift response the Christian Association of Nigeria in the 19 northern states and the Federal Capital Territory faulted the Supreme Council for Shari'ah in Nigeria over its call for the removal of the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Prof. Joash Amupitan, warning against what it described as the politicization of religion. Northern CAN described the demand as dangerous, unjustified and capable of undermining public confidence in a critical national institution, insisting that competence and integrity—not religious affiliation—should remain the basis for assessing public office holders. The SCSN had called for the immediate removal and prosecution of Amupitan, accusing him of compromised integrity over a legal brief in which he reportedly acknowledged claims of persecution and genocide against Christians in Nigeria. The council warned that Amupitan's continued stay in office posed “a serious threat” to the credibility of Nigeria's democratic process and claimed that Muslims would not recognize or legitimize any election conducted under his leadership, alleging that his integrity “is under a cloud. “The SCSN President, Sheikh Bashir Umar, made the call in Abuja during the council's 2026 Annual Pre-Ramadan Lecture and General Assembly.

Also in a related development the Muslim Rights Concern backed the SCSN, renewing calls for Amupitan's removal. In a statement issued by its Kano State Chairman, Mallam Hassan Indabawa, MURIC said it was fully aligning with the Shari'ah Council's position. “The Supreme Council for Shari'ah in Nigeria warned that Muslims nationwide will not recognize or accept the legitimacy of any elections conducted under the

leadership of Professor Joash Amupitan, the INEC chairman. The Muslim Rights Concern hereby aligns itself with the SCSN. It is a noble, consistent, justifiable and objective position,” the statement read. Indabawa recalled that MURIC had earlier called for Amupitan's removal in two separate statements in November 2025, citing what it described as “hate-filled” views expressed in a 2020 legal brief. MURIC also referenced concerns earlier raised by other groups, including the Association of Legislative Drafting and Advocacy Practitioners, alleging a potential conflict of interest “because Amupitan was part of the legal team for the ruling party during the 2023 presidential election petition.” According to MURIC, Amupitan's 80-page document titled “Legal Brief: Genocide in Nigeria: The Implications for the International Community” argued that attacks by Boko Haram insurgents and armed herders amounted to a “coordinated anti-Christian campaign,” a position it said contradicted the Federal Government's consistent rejection of genocide allegations against Christians.

The group warned that retaining Amupitan as INEC chairman could undermine confidence in the 2027 general elections. “Our position is that the demand for Amupitan's immediate removal, resignation or prosecution is to safeguard the credibility of the 2027 general elections. Allowing him to superintend Nigeria's electoral processes will erode credibility and legitimacy, as his integrity is already compromised,” MURIC said, alleging partisanship and bias against Muslims. However, Northern CAN, in a statement issued in Kaduna and jointly signed by its Chairman, Rev. Joseph Hayab, and Secretary General, Bishop Mohammed Naga, questioned the motive behind the sustained campaign against the INEC chairman. The association asked who was sponsoring the campaign and why such interests were allegedly hiding under a religious platform. Hayab said Amupitan, like every Nigerian, had a constitutional right to freedom of religion, stressing that expressing concern over challenges faced by one's faith did not amount to bias or disqualification from public office. “Anyone hiding under the guise of the Shari'ah Council to demand the removal of the INEC chairman over political or sectarian interests should come out boldly.

Otherwise, the ploy has died naturally,” the statement read. He noted that several Muslims had served in sensitive government positions despite controversial religious antecedents without facing similar scrutiny, urging Nigerians to prioritize competence over sectarian sentiment. Northern CAN warned that the controversy reinforced long-standing concerns about religious discrimination against Christians, particularly in appointments to sensitive national offices. It recalled that the two immediate past INEC chairmen were Muslims from northern Nigeria and cautioned against narratives suggesting that only adherents of a particular religion were qualified to lead the electoral body. “Are they saying

no other religion should serve as INEC chairman except Muslims? The most important question Nigerians should ask is whether Professor Amupitan is competent or not. That should be the focus, not his faith,” Hayab said. The association commended President Bola Tinubu for appointing a Christian as INEC chairman despite being a Muslim, describing the move as statesmanlike and inclusive. It likened the decision to that of former President Goodluck Jonathan, who retained a northern Muslim as INEC chairman despite intense pressure. Northern CAN urged the Shari'ah Council to openly identify any individual or group behind the campaign, warning against the use of religious platforms as “cheap cover” to intimidate public officials.

It also advised the INEC chairman to remain focused on his constitutional responsibility of conducting free, fair and credible elections. The group further expressed concern over what it described as emerging signs of a coordinated political agenda ahead of the 2027 elections,

competence, integrity and performance rather than religious affiliation, urging religious bodies to exercise restraint and promote peace and national cohesion.

Yowican, in a statement by its Chairman for the northern states and Abuja, Evangelist Dedan Clifford, described the call as “unwarranted and politically motivated.” Speaking in Kaduna, Clifford said the SCSN, not being a political party, had no constitutional basis to demand the removal of the INEC chairman. “What they are simply suggesting is that a Christian cannot hold that position. But the position is based on merit, and Prof. Amupitan deserves it,” he said. He noted that for over 15 years, INEC chairmen—including Professors Attahiru Jega and Mahmood Yakubu—had been Muslims without objections from Christians. Clifford suggested the council's actions might be influenced by external interests and warned that Christian youths would resist any attempt to undermine fairness in the country's democratic process.



citing recent comments by the Minister of Culture, Tourism and Creative Economy, Hannatu Musawa, on the implications of a non-Muslim–Muslim ticket for the APC. According to Northern CAN, such comments, combined with sustained attacks on a Christian INEC chairman, raised questions about attempts to undermine Christian participation and confidence in Nigeria's political process. It warned that framing politics strictly along religious lines could deepen divisions and threaten national unity. Similarly, the Youth Wing of the Christian Association of Nigeria and the Christian Media Forum condemned the call for Amupitan's removal. In a statement jointly signed by its National President, Jacob Dickson, and National Secretary, Andrew Mshelia, the CMF described the demand as baseless, divisive and dangerous to national unity, warning that it could erode public confidence in democratic institutions and inflame religious tensions. The forum stressed that democracy could only thrive when public officials were assessed on

Recent calls by the Supreme Council for Shari'ah in Nigeria (SCSN) for his removal may appear, at first glance, as the position of a single advocacy body. However, dismissing these concerns outright would be a mistake. Elections in a diverse and sensitive nation like Nigeria do not depend only on legal procedures; they depend heavily on trust - trust that the electoral umpire stands above political, religious, and sectional controversies.

The recent actions of the INEC Chairman on the issue of delisting the names of the Chairman of the African Democratic Party Senator David Mark and National Secretary Rauf Aregbesola from its official portal leaves much to be desired as it sparks a flurry of reaction from Nigerians. The move announced in early April stems from a legal battle over the control of the party following a 2025 leadership tussle. Following the resignation of the former National Working Committee led by Ralph Nwosu in

JULY 2025, David Mark and Rauf Aregbesola assumed leadership of the ADC to position the party for the 2027 general elections. However, this new structure was contested by Nafiu Bala Gombe a former Deputy National Chairman of the party who claimed he was the rightful successor under the party's constitution. In a surprise move INEC in a statement signed by Mohammed Kudu Haruna on April 12, 2026, INEC announced it was removing the names of David Mark and Rauf Aregbesola from its website in compliance with March 12, 2026 Court of Appeal order directing all parties to maintain the status quo ante bellum-meaning the state of affairs before the dispute started. By implication INEC announced that it would no longer receive correspondence from or deal with any faction of the ADC regarding party affairs until the court reaches a final decision. The Commission will not monitor any ADC meetings, congresses and conventions.

While responding to the recent actions of INEC, the National Publicity Secretary of the African Democratic Congress (ADC), Bolaji Abdullahi, has alleged that embattled party figure Nafiu Bala aligned with external political interests after allegedly receiving inducements, as the party's leadership crisis continues to generate controversy across Nigeria's political landscape. Speaking during an exclusive interview on Frontline, a current affairs programme on Eagle 102.5 FM, Ilese-Ijebu, Ogun State, Abdullahi accused the opposition of intentionally luring Nafiu Bala with offers the ADC could not match, insisting that the party is focused on saving Nigerians and not enriching political actors. "We made efforts to pacify him, we approached him, we tried to find something for him to do within the party, but at that point he had already approached people within government who were willing to use him, and we could not match what

they were offering him. Suddenly, this is a man we all know, and he now has a convoy of armored cars, security details, and is living in luxury.

Where did all that come from? For us, it is clear that he got a better offer elsewhere and decided to align with those interests against the party," he said. Recall that the leadership crisis within the ADC intensified in early April 2026 as factional leader Nafiu Bala publicly disowned a circulating resignation letter, labeling it a forgery. This development follows a Court of Appeal ruling that prompted INEC to de-list the rival National Working Committee led by Senator David Mark. Bala, who claims he is the rightful acting chairman as the party's highest-ranking original officer, faces accusations from opponents of being a sponsored agent meant to destabilize the party, even as his supporters' protest at INEC headquarters for his formal recognition. Abdullahi insisted repeatedly that there was no internal confusion within the ADC, contrary to public perception, maintaining that the situation was artificially created by external forces. "There was no confusion in ADC, except that which has been engineered by INEC, which is being used by the ruling All Progressives Congress on behalf of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. There is no confusion whatsoever. What INEC has done is to create a situation that never existed, and Nigerians are beginning to see through it. This is not about internal disagreement; this is about external interference designed to destabilize the party," he said at length.

The ADC spokesman also challenged INEC's authority over party leadership matters, describing its actions as unconstitutional and inconsistent with established legal precedents. He maintained that political parties operate as voluntary associations whose internal affairs cannot be



dictated by external bodies, stressing that INEC's role is limited to supervision. "INEC does not have the power to remove leadership of a political party. Fundamentally, a political party is a voluntary association, and if you are not a member of our family, you cannot come and remove the head of that family. The role of INEC is supervisory, not administrative, not to control political parties and decide how they run their affairs. What they have done goes completely against established legal principles and the very foundation of democratic practice in Nigeria," Abdullahi stated. Addressing the Court of Appeal ruling at the center of the dispute, Abdullahi explained that the

directive to maintain "status quo ante bellum" had been misinterpreted by INEC. He clarified that the ruling referred to maintaining the condition of the party before the conflict initiated by Bala, a period during which the leadership under David Mark was already in place and recognized. "The Court of Appeal ruling was very clear when it said maintain status quo ante bellum, which simply means return to the situation before the conflict started. Now, before Nafiu Bala went to court, David Mark was already the duly recognized chairman of the party following the NEC meeting of July 29, which INEC monitored and acknowledged. So how does maintaining status quo suddenly translate into removing an existing leadership and leaving the party without direction? That interpretation is not only fraudulent, it is dishonest and completely self-serving," he explained. Abdullahi dismissed Bala's leadership claim as baseless, clarifying that he was never chairman but one of several deputy national chairmen. "At what point was Nafiu Bala ever the chairman of ADC? That answer is clearly no.

He was one of the deputy national chairmen, one among six, and there was a resolution taken on July 25 that all members of the executive should resign, which he duly did. If he is now claiming that his signature was forged, that is a criminal offence. Has he reported to the police? Is there any official complaint anywhere? There is none, and

***We know they don't have anything to present to Nigerians. We know Nigerians have rejected them, and that is why they are doing all this. Why would they destroy PDP, destroy Labour Party, destroy SDP, destroy NNPP? Now they see that ADC, the only last hope of common man in Nigeria, is rising. Now they want to truncate it. But it will not happen. Nigeria is bigger than any individual, no matter how powerful he thinks he is," he added***

that tells you everything you need to know about the credibility of that claim," he said. On Bala's claim that his resignation was forged, Abdullahi dismissed the allegation, challenging him to provide evidence of any formal complaint to law enforcement authorities. He noted that forgery is a criminal offence that requires official reporting and investigation, which he said Bala had failed to initiate. "There is ample evidence available that shows he resigned, and beyond that, we even looked at his linguistic fingerprint. He has a peculiar way of writing certain words, and everything aligns with what we have on record, including the resignation letter. But even if, for the sake of argument, we accept that his signature was forged, the next NEC meeting dissolved the entire executive and brought in a caretaker committee led by David Mark. INEC was present, they monitored it, and they documented it. So this argument does not stand on any serious legal or factual ground," Abdullahi added. Responding to claims that earlier warnings could have prevented the crisis, Abdullahi dismissed the credibility of those cited, including Leke Abejide and Dumebi Kachikwu. Who are the people giving these warnings? Leke Abejide had publicly declared support for President Tinubu ahead of 2027 and was expelled for anti-party activities. Dumebi Kachikwu had also been expelled before we even came on board. "So how do individuals

who are no longer part of the party suddenly become authoritative voices on its internal affairs? These are distractions, and we know exactly who is pushing them and for what purpose,” he said. Abdullahi alleged a broader political conspiracy to weaken opposition parties, aiming to leave only one viable candidate ahead of the 2027 elections. “All these things you are seeing are meant to achieve a particular end, which is to ensure that by 2027 there will be only one candidate on the ballot.

That is the direction things are going if Nigerians do not pay attention. You can see what is happening across parties, how structures are being destabilized and weakened systematically. This is not accidental; it is coordinated, and it is dangerous for the future of democracy in Nigeria,” he warned. Abdullahi explained why the ADC approached the Court of Appeal despite the matter still being before the Federal High Court, citing Supreme Court rulings limiting jurisdiction over internal party affairs. “The reason for going to the Court of Appeal was to establish that the Federal High Court does not have



the locus to entertain this matter at all. The Supreme Court has already ruled clearly that issues relating to the internal affairs of political parties are not justiciable. So it is not about rushing; it is about ensuring that the law is properly interpreted and applied. The Court of Appeal itself acknowledged this and asked that the status quo be maintained while the matter is resolved,” he explained. Abdullahi affirmed that the ADC would proceed with its planned national convention, having complied fully with the law and notified INEC within the stipulated timeframe. “We have complied fully with the law by giving INEC the required 21 days' notice, and they acknowledged it. The Electoral Act clearly states that INEC may attend, not that it must attend, especially for internal administrative processes like electing party

officers. There is absolutely nothing unlawful about proceeding with our convention, and we will not allow illegal directives to derail our activities. Doing so would mean we are complicit in undermining democracy, and we will not accept that,” he stated. Calls for unity and public reaction Callers to the programme urged the party to prioritize unity and the national interest. Abdullahi acknowledged these concerns and reiterated the ADC's commitment to remaining a credible opposition. “We have heard Nigerians, and we understand their expectations. Democracy thrives when there is a strong and credible opposition, and that is what we are working towards.

We will continue to engage, to organize, and to ensure that the voices of Nigerians are not silenced. This is bigger than ADC; it is about the future of democratic participation in this country,” he responded. Concluding his remarks, Abdullahi framed the crisis as a defining moment for Nigeria's democracy, voicing confidence in courts and the judiciary. “What is at stake here is not just

the ADC; it is Nigeria's democracy itself. We believe in the courts, and we believe that there are still judges who understand their duty to this country. We will pursue this matter to its logical conclusion because we know we are on solid legal ground. We are not intimidated, we are not discouraged, and we will continue to participate fully in the democratic process regardless of the challenges before us,” he said. Abdullahi further criticized the government's

handling of national crises and the suppression of opposition parties. “Did you see the killings in Benue? Did you see the killings in Kaduna yesterday? People are celebrating Easter, and our president went to Jos and stopped at the airport and was blaming them for not having electricity, and they had only 10 minutes to spend with them at the airport, and he left for Abeokuta to go and enjoy himself. Is that the kind of thing we want to continue?

We know they don't have anything to present to Nigerians. We know Nigerians have rejected them, and that is why they are doing all this. Why would they destroy PDP, destroy Labour Party, destroy SDP, destroy NNPP? Now they see that ADC, the only last hope of common man in

Nigeria, is rising. Now they want to truncate it. But it will not happen. Nigeria is bigger than any individual, no matter how powerful he thinks he is," he added

Also in an official response from the ADC, The African Democratic Congress (ADC) has carefully reviewed the recent interview granted by the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Professor Joash Amupitan, and finds it necessary to respond, in order to correct several legal and factual misrepresentations. While the Commission seeks to present its position as one anchored in law and neutrality, the substance of the Chairman's own statements reveals a fundamental misapplication of both constitutional principles and judicial directives. First, the Chairman's repeated assertion that INEC is merely acting within the

This interpretation is both selective and legally flawed. The preservation order, by its nature, is intended to prevent actions that would irreversibly alter the subject matter of litigation, not to paralyze the internal functioning of a political party. The Chairman's attempt to define the "status quo" by tracing the controversy to internal party developments in July 2025 is an administrative interpretation that INEC is not empowered to make. That determination lies strictly within the jurisdiction of the courts, not the Commission. Furthermore, the Chairman's claim that holding congresses or conventions would "render proceedings nugatory" is an overreach. Internal party processes, conducted in line with the party's constitution and the Electoral Act, do not extinguish or prejudice pending judicial proceedings. On the contrary, democratic continuity within a political party is presumed under the

***However, the existence of internal disputes does not suspend a political party's constitutional rights. Indeed, such disputes are commonplace in democratic systems and are routinely resolved without administrative paralysis. INEC's role is not to arbitrate these disputes or to freeze party activities pending their resolution, but to maintain neutrality and allow due process to run its course. On the invocation of precedents such as Zamfara, the comparison is misplaced. Those cases involved clear and established failures to comply with mandatory legal requirements for primaries. In contrast, the ADC has demonstrated its commitment to conducting its processes in strict accordance with its constitution and the Electoral Act. Pre-emptively warning of hypothetical judicial consequences, as the Chairman has done, amounts to speculation and cannot serve as a legal basis to restrict lawful party activities.***

confines of a "multi-party constitutional order" is, with respect, a deflection from the central issue. The question before Nigerians is not whether Nigeria remains a multi-party state in theory, but whether the actions of INEC in practice are undermining the ability of opposition parties to freely organize and function. The ADC has not alleged the abolition of multi-party democracy in form; rather, it has raised concerns about actions that, in effect, weaken it. The Chairman's reliance on the existence of multiple parties as proof of neutrality does not address the specific conduct under scrutiny. On the issue of the Court of Appeal's order, the Chairman places heavy reliance on the doctrine of status quo ante bellum, suggesting that it requires a rollback to a particular point in time and a suspension of party activities.

law unless expressly restrained by a competent court. No such explicit order prohibiting congresses or conventions has been cited. What exists are general preservation directives, which cannot be expanded into a blanket prohibition on party governance. The assertion that INEC is restrained from monitoring congresses due to an injunction equally exposes a critical misunderstanding of its role. INEC's duty to monitor is statutory and triggered upon proper notification. A party's decision to proceed with its internal processes does not depend on INEC's participation. By conflating its monitoring function with the validity of the processes themselves, INEC effectively places itself above the law, assuming a veto power it does not possess. The Chairman also references conflicting communications from different factions within the ADC as justification for inaction.

However, the existence of internal disputes does not suspend a political party's constitutional rights. Indeed, such disputes are commonplace in democratic systems and are routinely resolved without administrative paralysis. INEC's role is not to arbitrate these disputes or to freeze party activities pending their resolution, but to maintain neutrality and allow due process to run its course. On the invocation of precedents such as Zamfara, the comparison is misplaced. Those cases involved clear and established failures to comply with mandatory legal requirements for primaries. In contrast, the ADC has demonstrated its commitment to conducting its processes in strict accordance with its constitution and the Electoral Act. Pre-emptively warning of hypothetical judicial consequences, as the Chairman has done, amounts to speculation and cannot serve as a legal basis to restrict lawful party activities.

Finally, while the Chairman frames INEC's position as one of caution to avoid future judicial invalidation of elections, this reasoning cannot justify present overreach. The law does not permit administrative bodies to curtail constitutional rights on the basis of speculative future outcomes. The proper course is to allow parties to act within the law and for courts to adjudicate disputes as they arise. In conclusion, the ADC reiterates that its right to organize congresses and hold its national convention is constitutionally guaranteed and has not been lawfully suspended by any court. The interpretation advanced by the INEC Chairman stretches judicial directives beyond their meaning and risks setting a dangerous precedent where regulatory caution becomes a tool for democratic suppression. The ADC as a political party therefore called for the removal of Prof. Joash Amupitan as INEC Chairman because he cannot be trusted for his partisanship and playing the script of APC the ruling party. Meanwhile, the Independent National Electoral Commission has dismissed calls for the removal of its chairman, Professor Joash Amupitan (SAN), while addressing what it described as widespread misconceptions surrounding its planned nationwide voter revalidation exercise.

In a statement issued in Abuja and signed by the Chief Press Secretary to the INEC Chairman, Adedayo Oketola, the Commission said its attention had been drawn to "recent public statements by political actors alleging partisan bias, calling for the removal of the Chairman of the Commission on account of the decision of the Commission to obey the recent Court of Appeal Judgment." While acknowledging the right of stakeholders to express their views, INEC stressed that its operations and leadership structure are constitutionally protected. "It is imperative to clarify that INEC is a creation of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The appointment, tenure, and removal of the Chairman and National Commissioners are strictly governed by Section 157 of the 1999 Constitution (as amended)," the Commission stated. INEC further

emphasized the independence of its leadership, noting that "The Chairman does not hold office at the pleasure of any political party or interest group." It warned that "Any call for removal outside the established constitutional process is not only a distraction but a direct assault on the independence of the nation's electoral umpire." Explaining its decision to comply with a recent Court of Appeal judgment, INEC said the move was necessary to avoid a repeat of past incidents. "The Commission decided to comply with the Judgment of the Court of Appeal to avert a situation that occurred in Zamfara State and Plateau State where elected officials were removed by the Election Tribunal on account of the disobedience of Court Judgment," it stated. The Commission added that it was also acting in line with a preservative court order, noting that it did not want to disobey the directive preventing any action that could render ongoing Federal High Court processes nugatory. INEC clarified that monitoring activities of the David Mark-led faction of the African Democratic Congress would amount to disobedience of that order.

The Commission further noted, "It was only on the 9th of September 2025 that INEC accepted and approved David Mark's Exco, which was seven days after the matter was filed at the Federal High Court." It stressed the binding nature of appellate court rulings, adding, "Section 287(2) of the Constitution of Nigeria, 1999 mandates every person and authority in Nigeria not only to obey the Judgment of the Court of Appeal but also to enforce such Judgment." On allegations of undermining the multi-party system, INEC dismissed such claims, noting that the recent registration and recognition of the Democratic Leadership Alliance, the Nigeria Democratic Congress, and the National Democratic Party—bringing the total number of active political parties to 22—demonstrates its neutrality. INEC maintained that it "remains a neutral regulator, not a participant in political competition." The Commission also reiterated its stance on internal party disputes, stating that it will not be drawn into the internal strife within political parties, nor allow itself to be used as a proxy for resolving organizational challenges that belong to the parties themselves. Addressing concerns over the planned voter revalidation exercise, INEC cautioned against politicizing the process. "The decision to revalidate the Voters Register pre-dates the appointment of Professor Amupitan," the Commission said.

The exercise, it added, is "a professional necessity to strengthen the integrity of the National Register of Voters" and is designed to "sanitize the register...executed in phases." INEC emphasized that the exercise is administrative, not a fresh registration, and is not targeted at any region, party, or demographic. It will be conducted uniformly across all Local Government Areas and Polling Units, with robust digital options for ease of access. "The revalidation process will help confirm the status of registered voters, address issues arising from transfers, multiple registrations, and

deceased persons, and enhance the reliability of voter data in Nigeria,” the Commission stated. Highlighting its focus on upcoming elections, INEC said: “The Commission is currently focused on the surgical precision required for the forthcoming Ekiti (June 2026) and Osun (August 2026) off-cycle elections. We will not be distracted by unfounded allegations of collusion or bias. Our allegiance remains solely to the Constitution and the will of the Nigerian people.” Reaffirming its commitment to democratic principles, the Commission stated that its decisions are guided by law and due process. “The decisions taken by INEC are based on thorough evaluations and aligned with the legal framework that governs our operations, including adherence to the Rule of Law,” it said. INEC reiterated that calls for the resignation of Professor Amupitan are “out of place.”

Meanwhile the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), Joash Amupitan, has come under heavy fire over the controversy surrounding the Court of Appeal ruling on the leadership of the African Democratic Party (ADC). Speaking via his X handle, actor-turned-politician Kenneth Okonkwo berated Amupitan, calling him the most incompetent INEC chairman in Nigeria's history. Okonkwo shared that after watching an interview featuring Amupitan on Arise TV's Morning Show, his conclusion is that the INEC boss is irresponsible and dishonest. The thespian, who is also a lawyer, said he was shocked to find out that Amupitan

learned about the judgment of the Court of Appeal from social media. “After listening to Prof Joash Ojo Amupitan, the INEC Chairman of Nigeria, on Arise TV, Morning Show, on the 3 March 2026, at about 9:30 am, I have come to the inevitable conclusion that the INEC Chairman is not only the most incompetent INEC Chairman in Nigeria history, but he is an irresponsible, dishonest person. “First, I was shocked to hear from the incompetent Chairman that he learnt about the judgement of the Court of Appeal from the social media. “This is a case that INEC is a party to and represented by a Counsel, yet the head of INEC heard about the judgement in the social media. I wish he had even said main media. What an indescribable level of incompetence! “What this means is that what we have is a social media chairman who takes decisions based on social media comments rather than pure legal principles. “Little wonder the quality of his decisions are at the same level with some social media miscreants and street urchins whose main aim is to attract traffic to their blog rather than making any sense in their scripts. ...” Okonkwo penned.

As the political storm gathers over the suspension of recognition of the Senator David Mark-led

leadership of the African Democratic Congress (ADC), by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), a versatile political analyst, Mahmud Jega has noted that the ongoing crisis rocking the ADC is being



deliberately orchestrated to weaken Nigeria's opposition bloc. Jega, who stated this when he featured as one of the panelists on Arise News programme 'Prime Time', specifically cautioned INEC against actions that could completely erode public trust in it, stressing that the commission must maintain its expected neutral position which should at all-time be above suspicion. Jega, who was part of the Asiwaju Bola Tinubu for president 2023 presidential campaign Media Team, noted that INEC's handling of opposition party developments has so far raised serious concerns. According to Jega; "A proposed platform, ADA, was allegedly stalled for two years before political actors shifted to ADC—only to face fresh hurdles. "The impression INEC is giving is that it is part of a scheme to destroy all opposition parties," he emphasized. Jega therefore challenged INEC to act with caution to avoid undermining Nigeria's democratic process. His remarks come amid growing tension within opposition circles and stakeholders' warning that any perceived bias by the electoral commission could further worsen political divisions ahead of the 2027 elections.

Reactions have continued to trail a statement made by Nigerian lawyer and human rights activist, Dele Farotimi, following a recent development involving the African Democratic Congress (ADC) and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). According to a report by Channels TV, INEC announced that it would no longer recognize David Mark and former Osun State governor, Rauf Aregbesola, as the National Chairman and National Secretary of the ADC. The decision quickly sparked debate across political and public spheres, with many questioning its implications for opposition politics in Nigeria. In response to the development, Farotimi took to his official X account on April 1, 2026, where he shared a strongly worded opinion on the situation. He suggested that while opposition parties are actively preparing for democratic elections, key institutions appear to be working toward a predetermined outcome. "The opposition members are preparing for an election, INEC, the judiciary and Tinubu are prepping for a coronation," he wrote. His statement rapidly gained traction online, drawing a wave of reactions from social media users. While some individuals supported his perspective, describing it as a reflection of growing concerns about electoral transparency, others criticized the comment as exaggerated or politically charged. The controversy highlights ongoing tensions surrounding Nigeria's political environment, particularly as discussions around electoral credibility, institutional independence, and opposition strength continue to shape public discourse. As the situation unfolds, the reactions underscore how developments involving INEC and political parties remain highly sensitive, often triggering strong and divided opinions among citizens.

Also Falana, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria and one of the country's most consistent legal voices, has sounded a warning that cuts through the noise: the judiciary and

segments of the legal elite are no longer neutral arbiters—they are, in his view, becoming instruments in a calculated political consolidation. At the heart of this claim is the growing dominance of All Progressives Congress under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. But Falana's argument goes further than partisan rivalry. He is not merely accusing a ruling party of expanding influence; he is alleging that the very institutions meant to restrain power are quietly enabling its concentration. Court rulings. Legal technicalities. Procedural interpretations. Individually, they appear routine. But taken together, Falana suggests they form a pattern—one that systematically weakens opposition parties, validates controversial political maneuvers, and gradually narrows Nigeria's democratic space.

This is where the alarm becomes impossible to ignore. Because democracies rarely collapse with a bang. They erode—slowly, subtly—through decisions that seem lawful, even justified, until the cumulative effect becomes undeniable. Falana's critique of senior lawyers is particularly cutting. In a profession bound by the defense of justice and constitutional order, he sees complicity where there should be resistance. Silence where there should be outrage. Advocacy, not for the rule of law, but for the preservation of power. And the implications are stark. A one-party state does not always announce itself. It emerges when opposition becomes ineffective, when legal challenges consistently fail, when institutions tilt—just enough—to make change nearly impossible. Nigeria, with its long and turbulent democratic journey, stands at a fragile crossroads. Is this simply the natural advantage of incumbency playing out through legal channels? Or is it something more deliberate—a restructuring of power under the cover of legality? Falana's warning forces a confrontation with that question. Not tomorrow. Now. Because if the courts lose their perceived independence, and the legal profession its moral authority, the consequences will extend far beyond politics. They will strike at the very idea of justice itself—leaving citizens not just unrepresented, but unprotected

Public trust in Amupitan is currently strained, particularly among groups worried about bias, while others trust his background as a legal scholar. His actions in the lead-up to the 2027 elections will likely determine the final verdict on his credibility. Even though he was appointed by President Bola Tinubu, his allegiance is first to the Nigerian People by ensuring that the rules are followed with due diligence without bias for partisanship for any party. The big question on the lips of every Nigerian and the diaspora is, will Amupitan live up to expectation and carve out a niche for himself and future generation or sacrifice it on the altar of compromise and allegiance to the ephemeral powers that be today. Everyone irrespective of status on earth must give account to the supreme deity who alone