INEC and JUDICIARY:
The Two Angels That Can Save Nigeria

By Dr. Gloria Boma Harry

Nigeria is approaching another defining moment in its democratic journey. As political activities gather momentum towards 2027, Nigerians are asking a fundamental question: Can the country still conduct elections in which the people's votes genuinely determine who governs them? The answer may lie largely in two institutions: the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and the Judiciary. I call them the two angels that can save Nigeria not because they are perfect, but because they occupy positions from which they can either strengthen our democracy or deepen public distrust in it.

INEC: Guard the Ballot

INEC is the gatekeeper of Nigeria's electoral process. Its responsibility goes far beyond organizing elections. It must protect the integrity of every stage of the process from voter registration and candidate nomination to voting, collation and declaration of results. The Commission must therefore rise above political pressure. It must not matter whether the candidate is an incumbent, opposition politician, billionaire, godson or political heavyweight. The rules must be the same for everybody. INEC must demonstrate that the ballot box not political influence, money or manipulation is where power is decided. Anything short of this will further erode public confidence and encourage citizens to conclude that elections are merely elaborate exercises in legitimizing predetermined outcomes.

Judiciary: Protect the People's Mandate

Then comes the Judiciary. When elections are disputed, Nigerians turn to the courts for justice. But this is where the stakes become even higher. A court judgment can affirm an electoral mandate or overturn it. It can determine whether the person chosen by voters retains power or whether another person assumes office. Such enormous power demands courage, independence and integrity. The Judiciary must never become an arena where political influence triumphs over justice. Judges must interpret the law without fear or favour and, while respecting electoral procedures, must never lose sight of the fundamental purpose of democracy: protecting the will of the people. There is nothing more dangerous to democracy than citizens believing that their votes can be defeated either at the polling station or in the courtroom.

2027: The Real Test

The 2027 elections will not merely be another political contest. They will be a test of Nigeria's democratic maturity. INEC will be tested on its neutrality. The Judiciary will be tested on its independence. Politicians will be tested on their willingness to respect the rules. And Nigerians will be watching. The country has heard countless promises about electoral reforms, democratic consolidation and respect for the people's mandate. What Nigerians need now is not another set of beautiful speeches or political slogans. They need institutions that work. INEC must have the courage to say no to political interference. The Judiciary must have the courage to say no to political pressure. And politicians must understand that winning an election is not the same as earning legitimacy.

Nigeria Needs Institutions, Not Heroes

Perhaps our greatest mistake has been the tendency to depend on individuals to rescue institutions. Nigeria does not need political heroes. It needs strong institutions. INEC must become an institution that politicians fear, not because it is hostile to them, but because it is impossible to compromise. The Judiciary must become an institution that citizens trust not because every judgment favours them, but because they believe every judgment is based on justice. If INEC protects the ballot and the Judiciary protects the law, democracy will have a fighting chance. But if either institution fails, the consequences will extend far beyond 2027. The question, therefore, is not simply who will win the next election? The bigger question is: Will Nigerians be allowed to choose, and will their choice be protected? That is the responsibility before INEC. That is the burden before the Judiciary. And that is the test before Nigeria. The two angels have been called upon. Nigeria is watching.

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