



AS 2027 ELECTIONEERING CAMPAIGN KICKS OFF

Issues on the 'front Burner'

Since the Independent National Electoral Commission announced the official campaign timetable for the 2027 General Election in line with the provision of the Electoral Act 2026 there has been flurry of political activities across the nation. The Presidential and National Assembly Election Campaign began on Tuesday 19th August 2026 and is expected to end on Friday 15th January 2027 exactly 24 hours before the Presidential Election scheduled for 16th January 2027. Governorship and State House of Assembly Elections campaign begins on Wednesday 9th September and will end on Friday the 5th February 2027 exactly 24 hours before the election scheduled for 6th February 2027. This is in line with the provision of the Electoral Act 2026 which stipulate that Political Campaigns may only commence 150 days before the date of an election. All campaigns must end 24 hours before polling day. Political parties, candidates and supporters are prohibited from commencing campaign before the official approved days and INEC has indicated that violations may attract appropriate sanctions.

The revised time table aligns with the Electoral Act 2026 and replaces the earlier election schedule initially proposed by INEC. Accordingly political parties and candidates are expected to begin public campaigns, including rallies, media advertisement, voters' engagement and grassroot mobilization from 19 August 2026 for the presidential election and National Assembly elections and from 9 September 2026 for the Governorship and state Houses of Assembly. As the electioneering campaigns continues it is very expedient and important that some critical issues that have bedeviled our nation in time past must be critically examined to avoid pitfall that could keep the nation in perpetual bondage. This kind of critical examination by every Nigerian will help us to know where and how to cast our votes in favor of any of the aspirant. These issues amongst other include but not limited to Insecurity, Corruption, Poverty and Unemployment, Economic Crisis, State Capture, Judicial Corruption amongst other.

INSECURITY

Nigeria is enmeshed in a scary height of insecurity. There is high rate of crime; banditry has become a harsh reality in the country today and every effort by the current administration have not yielded enough positive result as the menace continue to escalate unabatedly with wanton killings, bloodshed and continuous destruction of lives properties Findings revealed that poverty, unemployment and illiteracy are the major causes of insecurity especially in the North East and South East of Nigeria. Groups like Boko Haram and ISWAP operate in the northeast, overrunning military outposts and attacking local communities. Criminal gangs frequently abduct schoolchildren, travelers and villagers for Ransome

especially in northwest and northcentral and most recently western part of Nigeria. There is also Farmer-Herder Clashes and communal conflicts over land and grazing rights cause massive loss of life and displacement. There are also Resources-related crimes such as militancy, Oil theft and piracy which persists in the Niger Delta and Coastal areas. The core causes include poverty and unemployment which has led to joblessness and extreme poverty leave young people vulnerable to recruitment by criminal and extremist groups. Also, as a result of porous borders illegal weapons enter the country easily. Security forces often suffer from poor surveillance technology, overstretched personnel and weak local intelligence gathering. These has resulted into food insecurity because farmers abandon fertile lands out of fear of attacks driving up food prices. Millions of citizens remain internally displaced, living in temporary camps. Schools are closed in high-risk areas and this has the potential of hampering our educational growth.

The issue of insecurity is one that bothers the average Nigerian and as such it has become a serious matter that all the Presidential aspirants should be able to tell Nigerians their plans and strategies to help deliver the nation from this scourge which has ultimately paralyzed every other facet of National Development. Nigerians need a President who is determined and ready to lay down his life to rid the country of these monsters and bandits who have turned the nation into a killing field. Nigerians should be on the watch out for a President who will be courageous and decisive and prepared to match his words with action. Nigerians should look out for a Commander- in- Chief who is sympathetic and feels the pulse of the people. A leader who will lead from the front and not anyone who will love to stay back in his air-conditioned office to dish out instructions. Nigerians needs a president that will lead by example and sympathetic to the plight of the people.



CORRUPTION

Corruption remains a deeply entrenched systemic challenge in Nigeria today cutting across public administration, politics, law enforcement and basic service delivery. There is grand corruption in public finance and high level of financial misappropriation and budget discrepancies that has continued to draw sharp criticism. For instance, recent international Monetary Fund (IMF) and public oversight discussions highlighted billions to trillions of Naira in un budgeted or unaccounted state expenditure lacking legislative oversight. Every day interactions with public institutions such as policing, regulatory compliance and licensing frequently involve petty bribery, fast money demand and extortion. It is also on record that there is systemic patronage where political appointments and contracts awards are often driven by personal loyalties, nepotism and political patronage network rather than merit or transparent processes. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) reported recovering vast sums over 1.23 trillion Naira between late 2023 and mid-2026 alongside thousands of convictions with an increasing operational focus on cyber-crime and fraud. The anti-corruption agency recently dismissed and initiated prosecutions against over 40 of its own personnel over corruption and professional misconduct signaling an internal cleanup effort. The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) has continued to target institutional graft, uncovering fake agencies and pushing for stronger policy frame works across vulnerable sectors like aviation and public management. However, analysts and civil society groups have noted that true institutional independence for anti-corruption bodies remains constrained because key leadership appointments are tied directly to the presidency. Slow judicial processes frequently delays and a perceived lack of high-profile convictions that match the scale of grand corruption continues to fuel public cynicism and intermittent protest regarding governance and accountability. This depicts weak public trust.

It is therefore expected that anyone who aspires to lead as President must take into cognizance this institutional weakness and ensure that he acquaint Nigerians how he intends to navigate these challenges that has casted a slur in our journey as a nation to accountability and transparency. Nigerians should look out for a candidate among the pack with clean and untainted financial reputation. Any leader who has been indicted in one way or the other with financial misappropriation or diversion of

public funds will never make a good and prudent leader. Neither can he fight corruption. Nigerians should look back into their past record of stewardship to ascertain if they have what it takes to fight corruption. Nigerians should examine each of the Presidential aspirants on the basis of competence, transparency and accountability and not from the prism of ethnicity, tribalism and otherwise. Nigeria needs a leader with untainted reputation that will lead us with respect and integrity for global acceptance and relevance.

ECONOMIC CRISIS

Nigeria's economy is currently experiencing a deep paradox where macroeconomic indicators show recovery but ordinary citizens still face a severe cost of living crisis and high inflation. There is improving macro numbers. Real gross domestic product grew by 4.43 percent in the second quarter of 2026. External reserves crossed the \$54 billion mark in September 2026 due to high oil earnings and foreign exchange inflows. Stock performance and investors outlook have improved according to financial reports highlighted by BusinessDay. But very unfortunately all these indicators have not translated into real and positive impact in the life of the citizens. Millions of Nigerians still face acute hunger as staple food prices remain very high. Skyrocketing diesel and fuel prices and poor electricity supply make it hard for factories to operate as jobs are threatened. This high energy costs have made it very difficult for millions of households to meet up with the basic exigencies of life. The value of real income has dropped, shrinking the middle class and increasing poverty. The country is still waiting for this macro stabilization to turn into real household relief. Due to the combination of fuel subsidy removals, global energy shocks and erratic national grid supply pump prices for petrol have hovered over N1500 per litre. Businesses rely heavily on generators to function and energy costs alone now swallows up to 60% of small business profits. The Nigerian Economic Summit Group reported a staggering statistic; 30% of the country's MSMEs shut down over a single multi-month stretch during this crisis window wiping out trillions of Naira in economic value. Securing affordable credit remains almost impossible for the average shop owner. Less than 20% of MSMEs have formal access to finance leaving entrepreneurs dependent on personal savings or borrowing from family or friends. High inflation, volatile exchange rates and a heavy regulatory environment featuring multiple daily levies and taxes make it incredibly difficult for micro-enterprises to scale into stable, medium sized operations. Any leader who will lead Nigeria out of this financial doldrum must be

experienced. He must be a good manager of human and resources. He must be an economist who understands how the economy works. Nigerians must look out for contestants who has a good knowledge of global finances and has created wealth from hard work and not through government patronage or illicit wealth.

JUDICIAL CORRUPTION

Judiciary corruption in Nigeria severely undermines public trust turning courts into what many perceive as a market place for justice where rulings can favor the highest bidder. Key manifestations of corruption in Nigeria's Judiciary include bribery and extortion where litigants and lawyers often pay bribes to secure favorable judgements, manipulate sentences or pay court officials to intentionally misplace case files and evidence. There is a high level of political interference as the Executive and legislative branches often exert undue influence over judicial appointments and funding, reducing institutional independence. Some judges issue questionable injunctions that blocks anti-corruption agencies from investigating or arresting high profile suspects. Court processes are sometimes subverted through deliberate delays, stalling tactics and the strategic assignment of sensitive cases to compliant judges. Some of the causes of these problems stem from the fact the judiciary relies heavily on the Executive arm for its budgetary funding which compromises its absolute autonomy. Appointments are sometimes influenced by ethnic, religious, and political patronage rather than pure merit. Systemic weaknesses often create room for slow case processing, weak internal oversight and inadequate enforcement of ethical sanction create fertile ground for corrupt practices.

It is therefore imperative for all candidates vying for the office of the President of Nigeria to understand the absolute need for financial autonomy by granting the Judiciary direct control over its finances to eliminate executive leverage. This is one of the major ways to curb corruption in the judiciary. Such a leader must also ensure that there should be merit in the appointment of judicial officers. There should be need to reform the selection panels to strip politicians of nomination powers and base elevation strictly on professional track record. Nigerians must vote for a president who is strictly accountable such that he will strengthen the oversight role of the National Judicial Commission to swiftly discipline and prosecute compromised judicial officers. This is because until the credibility and integrity of the judiciary is restored it will continue to be for the highest bidder and stifle the hope of the common man.

State capture roots can be traced back to the colonial era when administrative and economic system were built to extract resources rather than serve local population. Post independence, this evolved into ethnic and patronage networks capturing state power to distribute rewards. Unlike regular corruption which break existing rules, state capture occurs when the powerful shapes the rule, laws, regulations and institutional appointments from the inside to favor themselves. This is manifested when the courts and judicial appointments face structural interference, where political affiliations influence selection processes. This undermines public trust and weakens the ability of the legal system o fairly arbitrate disputes against the ruling class. It can also be seen when the Executive arm often exerts undue influence over democratic referees including electoral management body and security agencies. A situation where public funds, state contracts and local government allocations are frequently controlled or neutralized by elite consensus bypassing constitutional intent or financial autonomy for lower tiers of government. There is also state capture when there is suppression of dissent. Laws and regulatory frameworks such as cybercrime legislation are sometimes applied broadly to suppress civil society and media oversight. State capture has negative impact on governance by weakening institutions.

This is because personal loyalty and patronage networks replace merit and institutional integrity. Besides citizens lose faith in the electoral and legal processes creating an environment vulnerable to systemic inefficiency, public resource drain and governance failure. State capture in Nigeria can influence the manipulation of the state laws, policies and public institutions by political elites, private networks and powerful interest group for private and political gain. And so, Nigerians must be very observant not to give their mandate to Presidential aspirants who either by experience or intention will embark on state capture. All institutions both democratic and public must be allowed to carry out their function as stipulated in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Collapsing and coercing institutions by Federal might to act in a way that promote political and personal interest of certain individuals irrespective of their positions will certainly erode the democratic ideals of every great nation. Nigeria as a country appears to be tilting towards this direction as we speak. This kind of situation must be avoided at all cost.