



THE ELECTORAL FORUM COMMEMORATES 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The Electoral Forum commemorates 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence with the theme: “Orange the World: End Violence Against Women Now”. 16 Days of Activism is an international campaign that runs on a yearly basis from 25th November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, until the 10th of December, Human Rights Day. It was started by activists in 1991 and continues to be coordinated each year by the Center for Women’s Global Leadership.¹ It serves as a platform for individuals and organisations around the world to call for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls.

In support of this initiative, The Electoral Forum calls for increased awareness of the violence being perpetrated against women during elections. Despite the fact that women comprise approximately half of most countries’ eligible voters including Nigeria,² studies on electoral violence are inclined to be gender-blind, without considering the distinct forms, nature and consequences of violence that women face in electoral and political processes, compared with their male counterparts.

Violence against women during elections is particularly destructive to the women concerned, as it excludes them from participation in governance. This partly explains why the rate of women’s political participation has remained poor over the years. For example, only 25% of all national parliamentarians are women, which is a slow increase from 11% in 1995.³ Similarly, only 24 countries have a woman as Head of State or Government. Indeed, this slow rate of progress has led UN Women to predict that gender equality in the highest positions of power will not be reached for another 130 years.⁴

Besides direct physical violence that is usually prevalent during elections, women also face other forms of violence in their everyday lives, such as harassment, economic abuse, and psychological abuse. These actions tend to undermine the morale, courage, ability and visibility of women. It further hinders the ability of women to fully and freely participate in the electoral process as voters, candidates and election officials.

The Electoral Forum condemns in very strong terms all forms of gender-based violence and advocates for the enforcement of the rights of women to live in peace and be protected at all times. We urge the National Assembly to finalise plans to establish a

¹ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/take-action/16-days-of-activism>

² In Nigeria, women constitute 47% of registered voters according to the 2019 voters register. Source: <https://www.pulse.ng/news/politics/this-is-state-by-state-breakdown-of-total-registered-voters-across-nigeria/4nr0720>

³ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures>

⁴ Ibid

National Electoral Offences Commission, and also ensure that the Commission adopts a gender-sensitive approach in addressing cases of violence during elections.

Ahead of the upcoming elections in Nigeria, including the 2022 FCT Area Council elections, the 2022 Ekiti and Osun governorship elections, and the 2023 general elections, we also urge the government, civil society organisations, political parties, the media, and citizens to put in place other mechanisms to prevent violence against women during elections. Such mechanisms may include laws and policies, trainings, awareness-raising campaigns, and advocacy meetings with relevant stakeholders. If these measures are put in place, we will be closer to achieving the goal of eliminating all forms of violence against women during elections, while also ensuring the security and safety of women at all times.

Signed

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The Electoral Forum is an initiative of The Electoral Hub that brings together resource persons from EMBs together with other electoral stakeholders to conceptualise solutions to the unique problems facing electoral governance in Nigeria by addressing both the supply (EMBs) and demand (CSOs etc.) sides of electoral services. This project is supported by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA).

