



# Transition Monitoring Group

(A Coalition of Human Rights, Non-Governmental and Civil Society Organisations)  
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## **ZERO-HOUR: THE SHABBY STATE OF PREPARATIONS FOR THE ELECTIONS *BEING TEXT OF A STATEMENT BY THE TRANSITION MONITORING GROUP (TMG) AT A PRESS CONFERENCE HELD AT THE TMG SECRETARIAT, ABUJA ON THURSDAY, APRIL 12, 2007***

We are at the zero-hour to the 2007 general elections yet there is every indication that we have learnt nothing from our past experience. The state of preparations for the elections is shabby, to say the least. There is also a deliberate effort to frustrate the TMG and other credible local observers from observing the elections.

### **INEC's ATTEMPT TO FRUSTRATE TMG FROM MONITORING THE FORTHCOMING ELECTIONS**

Initially the Independent National Electoral Commission was footdragging on accrediting the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) for observing the forthcoming elections. INEC instead accredited organisations without previous experience in election observation some of which did not even apply for accreditation.

On Wednesday, 11th April, 2007 TMG was informed that it was one of the organisations listed for monitoring the elections. However, contrary to established practice, INEC insisted that it would accredit individual observers at the state level. TMG asked its member organisations to go to the INEC state offices for collection of the observer barges. The report from the State Co-ordinators so far is that in some states the relevant INEC officials were not on duty, while in some other states the officials said that they had no directives regarding the matter.

There is therefore a deliberate attempt to frustrate the Transition Monitoring Group and other credible domestic observers from observing the elections.

Nevertheless, we hereby restate our position that TMG members will observe the elections with or without INEC accreditation.

There is also a clear absence of measures to forestall the rigging of the elections.

### **ABSENCE OF MEASURES TO CHECK THE TYPE OF ELECTION MALPRACTICES THAT OCCURRED IN 2003**

We are not yet aware of any serious measures put in place to prevent a repeat of the type of electoral malpractices that occurred during the 2003 general elections. For instance, what has INEC done to ensure that there is no repeat of the phenomenon of thugs appearing on police uniforms on the election dates.

Why can't INEC publish the list and identity of presiding and collation officers to check the incidence of impersonation of presiding and collation officers? How many original result sheets will be sent to the polling and collation centres? How can the original results sheets be identified? When and how will

the result of returns be published in order to prevent the changing of the results? How will INEC ensure that fake results are not collated at the collation centres? How will reports of electoral malpractices be dealt with before the announcement of the results?

Has INEC issued instructions for the preservation of the ballot papers for evidentiary purposes if the results of the elections are challenged at the election tribunals? What has INEC done on claims and objections with respect to the voters' register?


#### DISTRIBUTION OF REGISTERED VOTERS TO POOLING BOOTHS

There is still a total confusion on who will vote where which may lead to the disenfranchisement of some eligible voters. During the registration of voters exercise, the registration officials were roving from one place to another. This has presented the problem of how to allocate voters to pooling booths and INEC has neither sorted out this problem nor educated the electorates on where they could go to cast their votes.

#### ELECTORAL VIOLENCE

The incidents of electoral violence are escalating notwithstanding that the Federal Government is amassing troops on the streets. A pertinent question is the rationale for the deployment of soldiers on Nigerian streets during this election period. Is it to forestall violence? If so, what have they done so far? Or, are the soldiers deployed to crush any popular protest that may follow any attempt to manipulate the elections?

The pronouncement of the President that the election is a do-or-die affair amounts to psychological violence and constitutes a violation of the provisions of the Electoral Act 2006 Nigerians therefore need reassurance that they can safely cast their votes and go home safely.



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TMG