

In April 2003, voters throughout Nigeria will go to the polls to elect new leaders at the state and national levels of government. This is the third in a series of reports on the electoral environment in Nigeria as the country approaches these critical elections, the first civil transfer of power since 1983.

ANPP Senior Figure Assassinated

All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) national vice chairman Marshal Isokari Harry was murdered in his home on March 5, the highest profile assassination of the 2003 election season. Harry quit the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) last year and quickly moved into the upper echelons of the ANPP.

The ANPP holds the PDP responsible for the attack. The PDP has denied the charge, identifying the murder as "one too many, too ugly." The House of Representatives called upon President Olusegun Obasanjo and the Inspector General of Police, who appeared before a Senate committee, to resign if they could not quell the rising level of political violence. In a speech in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Obasanjo condemned the attack and vowed not to let violence mar April's elections, intimating that he would bring in the army if necessary.

The Inspector General has promised a "high-powered" investigation into the killing and, along with the Governor of Rivers State, has offered a 25 million Naira (\$200,000) reward.

The ANPP intends to convoke a political party summit on March 11 to discuss the rising level of political violence, though the party plans to exclude the PDP "to send a

collective message to the government of Obasanjo to tackle this problem." The Federal Government also has called for a summit - to include all parties - on March 19.

PDP and AD Strike Election Deal

In a widely expected announcement, the PDP and the Alliance for Democracy (AD) have reached an initial agreement on working together in the upcoming elections. Following a meeting in Abuja, the parties released a statement on implementing a peaceful and democratic transition, preventing electoral violence and establishing joint committees at the zonal level to monitor campaigns.

Many expected that the agreement would go further, requiring the PDP to withdraw its gubernatorial candidates in the AD's base, the South-West zone, in exchange for AD's endorsement of Obasanjo. However, the PDP General Secretary stated that the PDP had not conceded any races or ministerial positions to the AD. A deeper alliance would be appealing to the PDP because in 1999 Obasanjo failed to win any states in the Southwest despite his regional and ethnic ties there.

The ANPP has also courted the AD, which had decided not to nominate a presidential candidate of its own. In 1999, the AD and the All People's Party, precursor to the ANPP, presented Chief Olu Falae as their common candidate. Obasanjo defeated Falae with 63% of the vote to 37%.

Candidate Lists and Voter Rolls

On February 28, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) announced that 85% of the submitted candidates lists contained inadequate information. INEC said it would give parties until March 5 to provide further information about the candidates, or risk their disqualification in accordance with the Electoral Act. Candidate lists have been displayed sporadically in Resident INEC offices around the country.

Public inspection of the voter rolls will continue until March 8, at which point any of the 67 million registered voters may attend hearings at the Local Government Areas to identify omissions and make corrections. The exercise, which began in some states on March 1, has proceeded quietly with little press coverage. In some locations such as Kano, display of the list was delayed and by the ongoing national identity card campaign.

President Contests Constitutionality of 2002 Electoral Act

The Office of the President has taken INEC to court challenging the validity of the 2002 Electoral Act. The challenge is based on the fact that when the act was passed over the President's veto, the National Assembly did not have the two-thirds majority required by the Constitution. If the Office of the President succeeds, INEC would have to operate with the mandate from the Electoral Act of 2001. This Act mandates that the Presidential election be conducted first whereas the current electoral timeline calls for National Assembly election to precede the Presidential election. A court hearing is supposed to have taken place on February 26 but no decision has been publicly released.

This new lawsuit follows several court decisions in 2002 that struck down a National Assembly revision requiring that all elections take place on the same day, and

compelled INEC to register additional political parties and eliminate party processing fees.

Recent Reports of Violence

- ANPP and PDP supporters clashed in Sokoto and Kwara States over the removal of party posters, leading to arrests and injuries.
- ANPP Ebonyi State Chairman Chief Livinus Nwambe escaped unharmed after several men fired into his vehicle in Abakaliki.
- An explosion destroyed a private medical clinic in Port Harcourt owned by the secretary to the Rivers State Government.
- At a campaign rally, Governor Adefarati of Ondo State was pelted with stones.
- Kogi State Governor Audu of the ANPP escaped an attack by a PDP crowd in the city of Koton-Karfi.
- Leaders of the ANPP and PDP in Ebonyi State signed a communiqué condemning violence, political intimidation and violence after a spate of attacks by both sides
- A recent report from [Human Rights Watch](#) provides detailed accounts of killings and abuses carried out since the democratic transition in 1999 by the vigilante group O'odua People's Congress in the South-West.

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) is a nonprofit organization working to strengthen and expand democracy worldwide. Calling on a global network of volunteer experts, NDI provides practical assistance to civic and political leaders advancing democratic values, practices and institutions. In Central and West Africa, NDI conducts programs in Benin, Burundi, DRC, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. For more information on NDI's Nigeria programs, please contact Program Officer Marla Zometsky at NDI's Washington office at 202-728-5500.