

# **DAILY**

# **BULLETIN**

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## **PARTIES MUST CONDUCT THEIR CAMPAIGNS WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THE LAW, INEC DEMANDS**

**Barely 48 hours to the official commencement of campaigns by political parties for the 2023 General Election, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has once again reiterated the need for issue-based engagements, as well as peaceful conduct of party campaigns.**

The Commission urged all political parties to critically study and pay attention to the provisions of the Constitution, the Electoral Act, the Police Act and the Public Order Act for the proper and peaceful conduct of political campaigns, rallies and processions.

Chairman of the Commission, Professor Mahmood Yakubu, made the call, at the opening of a Two-Day Capacity Building Workshop for INEC Press Corps on INEC's Processes, Innovations, Preparations for 2023 General Election and Critical Issues in the Electoral Act 2022, organised with support from the European Union through DAI, in Lagos.

Represented by Chairman of Information and Voter Education Committee (IVEC), Festus Okoye Esq, the INEC Chairman outlined some of the dos and don'ts of political campaigns as prescribed by law.

He said, "the Constitution and Electoral Act 2022 are clear and unequivocal on what political parties and candidates must do and must not do during periods designated for campaigns and rallies".

"A political campaign or slogan shall not be tainted with abusive language directly or indirectly likely to injure religious, ethnic, tribal or sectional feelings.

"Abusive, intemperate, slanderous or base language or innuendoes designed or likely to provoke violent reaction or emotions shall not be employed or used in political campaigns", he added.

For the media, Prof. Yakubu called for unbiased reportage. He reminded members of the Press of their constitutional obligation, saying “let me also remind the media of their constitutional and legal obligations. State apparatus including the media shall not be employed to the advantage or disadvantage of any political party or candidate at any election.

“In other words, equal coverage and visibility shall be allotted to all political parties by all public print and electronic media organisations. The same applies in equal measure to private owned media organisations subject to payment of appropriate fees.”

The Chairman further stressed that as the Commission enters critical stages of the preparations for 2023 General Election, key stakeholders in the electoral process, particularly the Media need to acquire good knowledge and understanding of the workings and operations of the Commission. He harped on informed and balanced coverage of the Commission’s activities and the dissemination of information to the general public.

Also commenting on the timeliness of the workshop, Prof. Yakubu observed that the 2023 General Election was just 152 days away, stressing that “It is therefore important for the Media especially the INEC Press Corps, to have a good knowledge and understanding of the workings and operations of the Commission.”

He said; “as first-hand witnesses to the activities of the Commission, the INEC Press Corps is supposed to be the repository of electoral information in Nigeria. This places them in an advantageous position to play a critical role in shaping the opinions and editorial policies of their media organisations on issues relating to the programmes and policies of the Commission.”

The implication of this is that the INEC Press Corps must be familiar with the Constitutional mandate of the Commission and the roles and powers ascribed to it. The INEC Press Corp must therefore strive to understand the intent and nuances of the powers granted to the Commission by the Constitution and the Electoral Act that are expressed in subsidiary legislations including the Commission’s Regulations, Guidelines and Manuals.

In his welcome address, the Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC) for Lagos State, Mr. Olusegun Agbaje noted that capacity building workshops such as this presents a unique opportunity for participants to be well equipped with adequate knowledge of the processes of the Commission.

The REC urged the Media to among other things, help reduce electoral violence to the barest minimum, by educating the citizens on the provisions of the Electoral, as well as the rules and regulations guiding the 2023 General Election.

Agbaje noted that as the clock gradually clicks towards the 2023 General Election, the Media have a supreme call and duty to; mobilise, sensitise and enlighten the electorate on all electoral processes by educating them on their responsibilities to perform their civic roles to vote for any candidate of their choice in all elective posts.

While stating the objectives of the Workshop, the Chief Press Secretary (CPS) to the INEC Chairman, Rotimi Oyekanmi, averred that “it is clear that the Media by its nature and functions is the most vital entity with the capacity to facilitate public understanding of not only the Commission’s functions and actions, but also the entire electoral architecture.”

He said the workshop’s main objective is to enlighten and broaden the participants' knowledge about the Commission’s processes and procedures, innovations, and critical aspects of the new Electoral Act”.

The CPS added that members of the Press Corps will have the opportunity to interrogate all presentations made as consortium in what promises to be a series of robust interaction and convergence of ideas”.

The Team Lead for DAI, Rudolf Elbling in a goodwill message said the workshop was a demonstration of INEC's strong commitment to transparency, and in ensuring that the public remains well informed about its stewardship of the electoral process.

“I hope that the Press Corps members invited to this event, but also the entire press fraternity in Nigeria will find this two-day capacity building workshop greatly beneficial to the widest extent, and that in particular, it will be a very rich source of electoral facts and evidence to inform your journalistic work”, he added.

Chairman of the INEC Press Corps, Segun Ojumu, commended INEC for its open-door policy and support to the Media.

He noted that the next few months promises to be very busy for the Commission and called on INEC to respond even quicker to issues as they come up in the weeks and months ahead.

Ojumu noted that “a lot of fake news, misinformation and disinformation have found their ways to the media space. INEC must be on top of its game and be in charge of the narrative.”

Also in attendance at the Workshop are National Commissioners; Mohammed K. Haruna, Prof. Kunle Ajayi, and Maj. Gen. Modibo Alkali (Rtd).

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