

115TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. 716

Calling for credible, transparent, and safe elections in Nigeria, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

DECEMBER 6, 2018

Mr. MENENDEZ submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the
Committee on Foreign Relations

RESOLUTION

Calling for credible, transparent, and safe elections in
Nigeria, and for other purposes.

Whereas it is in the best interest of the United States to maintain a strong bilateral relationship with a politically stable, democratic, and economically sound Nigeria that can play a leadership role in the region and the continent more broadly;

Whereas Nigeria has presidential elections scheduled for February 16, 2019, and gubernatorial and National Assembly elections scheduled for March 2, 2019;

Whereas credible elections could further consolidate democratic gains achieved in Nigeria over the last two decades since the transition from military to civilian democratic rule;

Whereas a 2017 survey conducted by Afrobarometer found that 72 percent of Nigerians agreed that democratic elections are the best means of choosing their country's leaders, thus indicating that the country's citizens are deeply committed to democracy;

Whereas collaboration between civil society actors and the international community was a key factor that contributed to successful elections in 2015;

Whereas successive elections in Nigeria have featured varying degrees of violence;

Whereas there have been deeply concerning instances of hate speech in Nigeria by members of both the ruling coalition and the opposition inciting supporters to ethnic violence as a means by which to gain electoral advantage, intimidate electoral rivals, or suppress voter turnout;

Whereas, during the Ekiti and Osun gubernatorial elections in July 2018 and September 2018, respectively, there were concerning incidents in which some elements of Nigeria's security agencies displayed partisanship and a lack of objectivity, which risks escalating tensions within the country;

Whereas Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has improved the voting process, notably through the introduction of continuous voter registration, the adoption of simultaneous accreditation and voting, improvements to the secrecy of the ballot, and the advancement of smart card reader technology;

Whereas the statement of the September 2018 Joint National Democratic Institute/International Republican Institute Pre-Election Assessment Mission to Nigeria cited remaining challenges and concerns such as delays in finalizing

the legal framework for the elections, delayed release of funds for the elections, security threats in the Middle Belt and North East, instances of vote-buying, and incitement to violence and disinformation; and

Whereas ensuring transparency in electoral preparations and building public confidence in the electoral process is vital for the success of the upcoming elections in Nigeria: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) reaffirms that the people of the United
3 States will continue to stand with the people of Ni-
4 geria in support of peace and democracy;

5 (2) calls on the Government of Nigeria and all
6 political parties and actors to—

7 (A) take actions to facilitate elections that
8 are credible, transparent, and peaceful in order
9 to support the will of the people and advance
10 the consolidation of democracy and the stability
11 of the broader region;

12 (B) condemn in the strongest terms the
13 use of hate speech and incitement to violence,
14 and refrain from any rhetoric or action that
15 seeks to demonize or delegitimize opponents,
16 sow division among Nigerians, or otherwise in-
17 flame tensions;

1 (C) seek to resolve any disputes over re-
 2 sults peacefully, including through the legal sys-
 3 tem as necessary; and

4 (D) respect the impartiality of the Inde-
 5 pendent National Electoral Commission;

6 (3) calls on the Government of Nigeria to—

7 (A) refrain from deploying security forces
 8 in a partisan manner;

9 (B) ensure that security services maintain
 10 the highest level of professionalism and impar-
 11 tiality in facilitating the electoral process, en-
 12 able accredited observers and journalists to per-
 13 form their work, and protect the right of citi-
 14 zens to exercise their votes freely;

15 (C) move expeditiously to finalize the pro-
 16 posed reforms to the legal framework for elec-
 17 tions and to ensure the disbursement of req-
 18 uisite funds for the 2019 elections; and

19 (D) enforce laws against election malfea-
 20 sance, including vote buying, and ensure equal
 21 and robust application through such measures
 22 as the establishment of the Electoral Offenses
 23 Commission and Tribunal;

24 (4) urges all Nigerians to fully and peacefully
 25 engage in the electoral process, insist on full enfran-

chisement, reject inflammatory or divisive rhetoric or actions, and seek to resolve any disputes over results through the legal system;

(5) calls upon the Independent National Electoral Commission to sustain confidence and trust in its management of the electoral process by—

(A) taking concrete measures to combat vote buying through voter education campaigns, enforcement of laws against voter inducement, and a nationwide ban on cell phones in the voting cubicle;

(B) releasing specimen ballots well in advance of Election Day so that civil society and other electoral stakeholders can conduct sufficient education to orient voters;

(C) making adequate arrangements to ensure the participation in the election of internally displaced persons (IDPs); and

(D) taking steps to clean the voter roll and ensure timely production and distribution of the Permanent Voter Card to new voters;

(6) encourages political parties in Nigeria to adhere to and enforce existing codes of conduct that commit parties to democratic electoral standards regarding campaign use of resources, engagement of

1 voters, peaceful resolution of disputes, and accept-
2 ance of verified and credible results;

3 (7) condemns any efforts on the part of any
4 politicians or political parties in Nigeria to politicize
5 the security and law enforcement agencies;

6 (8) encourages civil society organizations in Ni-
7 geria to—

8 (A) promote the peaceful participation of
9 citizens in the electoral process and draw on ex-
10 isting inter-religious and peacebuilding bodies
11 to enhance their efforts;

12 (B) disseminate information about citizen-
13 based observation findings and analysis to in-
14 crease public knowledge and understanding
15 about the conduct of the elections; and

16 (C) continue leading important early warn-
17 ing and response mechanisms to mitigate elec-
18 tion-related violence, including through efforts
19 to monitor hate speech and other forms of in-
20 citement, and further strengthen democratic
21 processes;

22 (9) supports efforts by the Department of
23 State, including the Bureau of Conflict and Sta-
24 bilization Operations, and the United States Agency
25 for International Development (USAID) to assist

1 election-related preparation in Nigeria, including
2 through programs focused on conflict mitigation;
3 and

4 (10) calls on the United States Government and
5 other international partners, especially election-foc-
6 cused nongovernmental organizations, to—

7 (A) continue to support efforts by the Gov-
8 ernment of Nigeria to address the remaining
9 electoral preparation challenges and identify
10 gaps in which additional resources or diplomatic
11 engagement could make important contributions
12 to the conduct of the elections; and

13 (B) support civil society organizations and
14 media organizations working towards trans-
15 parency and accountability in the use of state
16 resources around the election period.

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