Global Rights · Incident Centre for Election Atrocities (ICEA)

ICEA Watch | 25 August – 30 September 2026

ELECTION ENVIRONMENT BASELINE — NIGERIA

CAMPAIGN SEASON: Presidential and National Assembly campaigns opened 19 August; governorship and State Assembly campaigns opened 9 September.

ICEA INCIDENTS RECORDED: 15 reported incidents involving electoral violence, including three incidents of voter intimidation, four killings, two abductions, four attacks on politicians and traditional leaders and two incidents involving the vandalisation of political offices.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK: Electoral Act 2026 Sections 95-97 address political rallies and processions, campaign conduct and threats of force or violence

Every incident in this edition happened during the campaign season, with the Electoral Act 2026 in force. Violence in this period was not tied to a polling day. It reached party meetings, party offices, candidates' convoys, local chairmen and traditional rulers and, in several cases, was foreshadowed by public threats from officeholders. The incidents highlighted below are those with the clearest implications for electoral participation and the civic space.

A SNAPSHOT OF EVENTS

VOTER INTIMIDATION

Officeholders in the FCT, Borno and Edo were reported to have threatened or coerced voters between 25 August and mid-September.

ASSEMBLY AND MOVEMENT

Peter Obi's convoy was blocked in Makurdi on 8 September; the police later reported 46 arrests.

POLITICAL ASSEMBLY

Gunmen opened fire on an NDC ward meeting in Obuoffia, Enugu. The police and the party gave different casualty figures.

ASSOCIATION AND PROTEST

Party offices were attacked in Rivers and burned in Sokoto, for two different reasons.

CANDIDATE SECURITY

Suspected Boko Haram insurgents ambushed the convoy of Borno's APC governorship candidate Mustapha Gubio with explosives on 3 September.

RIGHT TO LIFE AND LIBERTY

Armed groups abducted party chairmen and traditional rulers in Niger, Kogi and Kano.

ACCOUNTABILITY

An NDC ward chairman was found dead in Makurdi on 29 September. No suspect has been named.

01 · VOTER INTIMIDATION

Officeholder's threats open the campaign season

On 25 August 2026, a video circulated of the Kuje Area Council Chairman in the FCT, Samuel Danjuma Shekwolo, telling residents they must either support the APC or leave. He clarified the next day that he had no right to disenfranchise anyone. Around 29 August, Borno State Commissioner Sainna Buba was reported to have told an APC campaign gathering in Maiduguri that those who refuse to back the party in 2027 would be flogged; he retracted the remark and apologised on 2 September. In mid-September, a video showed the Esan West LGA Chairman in Edo State, Blessing Ebhodaghe, telling drivers at Onitsha Park in Ekpoma to wear only APC caps or be removed from the park, tying the order to the governor's pledge of 2.5 million votes for President Tinubu.

Civic space and electoral significance: The Electoral Act 2026 speaks directly to this conduct. Section 97(1) bars any party, candidate or person from directly or indirectly threatening anyone with force or violence in order to compel or prevent political support. Section 96 bars abusive and inflammatory campaign language, and for a candidate the penalty under section 96(7) is up to ₦5 million or 12 months in prison, with parties facing ₦10 million for a first offence. The reports reviewed do not indicate that any of these officeholders has been prosecuted or formally sanctioned. Retractions without consequences leave the signal intact: when the person issuing the warning controls local services, park access or party structures, the freedom to associate with the party and candidate of one's choice (section 40 of the Constitution) is exercised under pressure.

02 · ASSEMBLY AND MOVEMENT

Obi's convoy blocked on the road to Yelwata

On 8 September 2026, a crowd blocked the convoy of Nigeria Democratic Congress presidential candidate Peter Obi on the Gboko–Makurdi road near the Air Force Base in Benue State. He was travelling to Yelwata, the community devastated by the 13 June 2025 banditry attack that killed over 200 villagers, on what he described as a humanitarian visit rather than a campaign stop. Videos showed youths carrying sticks and chanting that they did not want him, and the convoy turned back. A letter from the NDC's state chairman dated 7 September, stamped "received" by the Police

Command, requested security cover; the Commissioner of Police said the command was told at about 5:30pm that day and deployed three escort vehicles.

Three accounts diverged. The NDC alleged the group was led by an aide to Governor Hyacinth Alia. The state government said it knew nothing of the visit and denied sponsoring anyone. The police said they were investigating, and on 9 September announced that 46 people had been arrested and that more suspects were being sought.

Civic space and electoral significance: Section 95 of the Electoral Act 2026 requires the police to provide adequate security for political rallies and processions, limits the role of security agencies at such events to that task, and provides that, notwithstanding the Police Act or the Public Order Act, parties and candidates are not to be prevented from holding rallies, processions or meetings for legitimate political purposes. A visit to condole with victims is protected by the constitutional rights to freedom of movement and association (sections 41 and 40 of the Constitution) whether or not it is labelled a campaign. The arrests are a positive step. The test now is whether those who organised and funded the blockade are identified and charged, and whether the dispute over who knew about the visit is resolved from the record.

03 · POLITICAL ASSEMBLY

Gunfire at an opposition ward meeting in Enugu

On the morning of 12 September 2026, armed men stormed a Nigeria Democratic Congress ward meeting at Obuoffia Awkunanaw in Enugu and opened fire. A speaker had been teaching members how to recognise the party's logo on the ballot paper when the attack began. The police confirmed that at least two people were injured; the party said eight members were shot and published their names. The NDC accused the APC of sponsoring the attackers, an allegation that has not been established. The same day, the police confirmed a separate attack on a PDP rally at Agbani, where canopies and chairs prepared for the event were destroyed. Party members say both attacks follow earlier disruptions of opposition ward meetings in the area.

Civic space and electoral significance: Ward meetings are where parties register members, explain ballot procedures and prepare agents. Section 40 of the Constitution protects assembly and association, and section 95 of the Electoral Act 2026 requires the police to provide adequate security for political activity and provides that parties are not to be prevented from holding rallies, processions or meetings. An armed attack on a meeting is the most direct way of preventing one. Two things now matter: that attackers are identified and prosecuted regardless of which party they are said to serve, and that the police reconcile their casualty figures with the party's through a public

account. Without that, members of the targeted party, and the PDP supporters attacked the same day, have little reason to expect that the next meeting will be protected.

04 · ASSOCIATION AND PROTEST

Party offices attacked: two different kinds of anger

In early September, on a Wednesday night, suspected political thugs stormed the NDC secretariat in Emohua town, Rivers State, and tore down the billboards and campaign banners mounted on it. The party's House of Representatives candidate for the Ikwerre/Emohua constituency called for tolerance and calm.

On Friday, 11 September, residents of Tambuwal LGA in Sokoto State, many of them from villages displaced by bandit attacks, blocked the Tambuwal–Jega and Tambuwal–Aleiro roads and demanded the deployment of security personnel. Later, an APC office was set on fire; one witness said the video did not show the burning. A protester, Usama Ibrahim, was shot in the thigh and said security personnel fired the shot. The Sokoto police said they deployed personnel and brought the situation under control. One report said terrorists had recently stormed the area's market and issued a seven-day ultimatum.

Civic space and electoral significance: The two incidents involve a party's right to operate offices and display its materials, and residents' right to protest. Peaceful protest is protected under section 40 of the constitution; arson is not. But treating Tambuwal only as electoral vandalism misses the root claim, which is about the state's duty to protect life and property (section 33), and the reported shooting of a protester, if it came from security personnel, needs an independent explanation regardless of what happened to the office. In Rivers, the target was chosen by party colour, and the message is to the party's members.

05 · CANDIDATE SECURITY

A candidate's thank-you visit ends in an ambush

On Thursday, 3 September 2026, the convoy of Mustapha Gubio, the APC governorship candidate in Borno State, was ambushed along the Gubio–Kareto–Damasak highway as it returned from a thank-you visit to supporters in Damasak. Suspected Boko Haram insurgents used an explosive device and rocket-propelled grenades. Soldiers, police and other security escorts repelled the attack, a police armoured vehicle was damaged, and no casualties were reported.

Civic space and electoral significance: A candidate with a heavy security escort was targeted on a public road as the campaign season opened. That raises the question of how party agents, local candidates and voters travelling the same corridors will be protected, particularly in the north-east

where roads between communities are themselves a security risk. Section 95 of the Electoral Act 2026 puts the duty to secure political activity on the police; the test is whether that protection reaches conflict-affected LGAs and candidates without the escorts a governorship nominee commands.

06 · RIGHT TO LIFE / LIBERTY

Party chairmen and traditional rulers killed or taken

ICEA recorded six incidents in which armed groups killed or abducted party and traditional officeholders in Niger, Kogi and Kano. On 25 August, terrorists reportedly killed a district head in Agwara LGA, Niger State, after he warned them to stay away from his community. On 27 August, gunmen ambushed motorists on the Itobe–Ochadamu expressway at Ojuwo Olijo, Ofu LGA, Kogi State, killing Ishaq Yunusa, the APC chairman of Dekina LGA, and abducting another occupant of the vehicle; the attack came barely ten days after the state government held a security meeting on kidnappings along that corridor. On the night of 30 August, gunmen invaded Rantan community in Bebeji LGA, Kano State, and shot the APC ward chairman, Garba Buba, who died in hospital; another resident, Sulaiman Zunduma, was also killed, and the chairman's wife and two children of a businessman were reportedly abducted.

The following night, gunmen took the APC chairman of Rogo LGA from his home in Beli village; reports differ on whether a resident was killed or wounded. On 19 September, terrorists abducted a traditional leader, his son and another relative from their home in Mariga LGA, Niger State, and, the same day, a monarch in Gezawa LGA, Kano State.

Civic space and electoral significance: ICEA does not presume that politics was the motive in each case; the attackers were described variously as terrorists, bandits and kidnappers. But local party chairmen and traditional rulers are the infrastructure of electoral participation: they convene members, mediate disputes and anchor trust at community level. Their killing or abduction endangers the right to life and liberty (sections 33 and 35 of the constitution) and weakens local political organization in already insecure LGAs. Repeated attacks along the same corridors point to a protection gap that persists with or without an election.

07 · ACCOUNTABILITY

An NDC ward chairman is found dead in Makurdi

On Tuesday evening, 29 September 2026, Igbu Terhemen, the NDC chairman of Fiidi Council Ward in Makurdi, Benue State, was attacked and tied up, and was found near his home, where he died. The party said a friend noticed a needle-like mark on his body and that he believed he had been injected with a substance suspected to be poisonous. No suspect has been named, and the reports available

do not establish that his political activities were the reason for the attack. The state NDC condemned the killing and called for investigation.

Civic space and electoral significance: ICEA draws no link between this killing and the blockade of Mr Obi's convoy in the same city three weeks earlier. The point is accountability. Where a party official dies in unexplained circumstances during a campaign, a slow or opaque investigation allows speculation to fill the gap and discourages others from taking up party roles. Prompt, transparent investigation, including publication of medical findings, protects the family's right to justice and public confidence in the process.

TRENDS TO WATCH

1. **Enforcement gap on threats and inflammatory language**

   Sections 96 and 97 of the Electoral Act 2026 prescribe fines and imprisonment, but retractions have so far substituted for sanctions. Whether any officeholder is charged will signal how seriously the law will be applied through the January and February polls.

2. **Protection of rallies and movement**

   The Obi arrests show the police can act quickly. What matters is consistency: the same protection and the same investigative energy for every party's meetings, in every state.

3. **Attacks on party meetings and structures**

   Gunfire at an NDC ward meeting and a PDP rally in Enugu, the vandalised NDC secretariat in Rivers, and the burned APC offices in Sokoto show that party structures are being hit across parties and regions. Whether the police can protect all of them equally will shape how freely parties can organise through January and February.

4. **Insecurity inside the electoral process**

   Attacks on party chairmen, traditional rulers and a candidate's convoy show insecurity shaping who can organise and travel. Local structures in the north-west, north-central and north-east are most exposed.

5. **Protest, party property and the use of force**

   Grievance protests that target party offices will continue as insecurity and hardship persist. How security forces respond, and whether shootings are investigated, will shape the line between protest and violence.

6. **Contested accounts and unresolved cases**

   In Benue, three institutions gave three different explanations for the blockade; in Enugu, police and party casualty counts differ; in Makurdi, a death has no named suspect. Credible, public findings are the remedy for each.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

The reporting period highlights threats to political participation, including intimidation, restrictions on movement and assembly, and attacks involving local party officials and traditional rulers. These incidents show how insecurity can undermine civic space beyond election day.

With the presidential and National Assembly elections set for 16 January 2027 and governorship and State Assembly elections on 6 February, the key challenge is ensuring effective enforcement of the Electoral Act 2026, adequate protection for political activities and credible investigations to safeguard democratic participation