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Iwu urged not to postpone election

31/1/2007

THE signal are not clear. Fears are mounting that this year's election may not hold. Put succinctly, there are insinuations that the polls may be postponed. The result is political apathy.

From the electoral body, mum is the word. Politicians, especially the functionaries of the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), give commitment on the handover date. To the public, it is film trick.

But, a group, "Citizens for Nigeria," is warning against the breach of public trust by the Professor Maurice Iwu-led Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC).

Should INEC fail to conduct election this year, Biodun Durojaiye, the group's Director of Operations, said the electoral body will go down as the greatest threat to democracy.

He spoke in Lagos on the state of the nation. The contentious issues agitating the mind of the group include the cloud hovering on the electoral time table, public conduct of government officials, the threat posed to the polity by former military heads of state and corruption in high places.

On the election, Durojaiye asked Nigerians to be vigilant and "be prepared to hold the leadership of INEC and Federal Government accountable, if voter fraud is perpetrated against the citizens."

He also had a task for the political parties. The CFN leader charged their leaders to shun political thuggery, harassment and intimidation of political opponents.

"We remind INEC of the institution's unique and sacred importance as a public trust. We further implore the INEC to set rhetoric and sound bites aside, and employ tangible, reassuring measures to allay the collective political fears of the Nigerian electorate," Durojaiye said.

One isolated case which the group has brought into the front burner is the candidature of Andy Uba, the PDP governorship flagbearer in Anambra State.

According to Durojaiye, the politician should be disqualified from contesting the election until the allegations against him are cleared.

If Uba is allowed to contest the election without resolving the controversy, he believed that it would affect the public perception about the on-going anti-corruption war.

Government, the CFN leader also said, must do away with political absurdities. If the president/vice president feud abates, and minority legislators do not pose any threat to the governor. Durojaiye said the nation would be relieved by tension.

The group has other commitments. A particular unfinished battle, say the director of operations, is the concerted effort of the group to prevent the emergence of General Ibrahim Babangida as president.

In realisation of the objective, a monthly newsletter, "Against Babangida.com" was established to sensitise the



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US Dollar	126.01
Pound Sterling	233.9502
Euro	157.9283
Riyal	33.5919
WAUA	185.3941
Yen	1.0529
CFA	0.2342

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people to the looming danger of returning the former military leader to Aso Rock.

Asked to justify the campaigns, Durojaiye said the memory of the eight years of wasted expectation between 1985 and 1993 when Babangida was in the saddle should inspire Nigerians to perceive him as a liability.

Revisiting the core public officials conduct, the group regretted that the public declaration of assets by functionaries of government has been taken with levity.

"The CFN believes that the public declaration of assets should be the "new-normal" in the next political dispensation. The current situation whereby defected politicians declare their assets in camera and nobody gets to see the declaration has proven to serve no purpose. Nigerians can no longer be deceived," Durojaiye added.

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