

Abuse of State Fiscal Resources

in the

**2023 Presidential & National
Assembly Elections**

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ABUSE OF STATE FISCAL RESOURCES IN THE 2023 PRESIDENTIAL AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

State Administrative Resources are public resources at the disposal of the three tiers of government for the day-to-day performance of state duties and functions. These resources could be financial, administrative/institutional, media, regulatory, coercive, legislative, etc.

The abuse of State Administrative Resources (SAR) has been a common practice amongst incumbents either contesting for election or mobilising support for an adopted candidate. The use of these resources gives the incumbent an undue advantage over other candidates. For financial resources, public funds secured through kickbacks and over-invoicing of contracts can be used to finance the campaign of the incumbents. Public funds directly stolen from the budget can also be used to fund campaigns.

Misuse of administrative resources undermines fundamental democratic values which are considered the very essence of civilised societies.

By Section 95 of the Electoral Act, 2022, it is provided that,

“(1): A candidate and his or her party shall campaign for the elections in accordance with such rules and regulations as may be determined by the commission.

(2) State apparatus including the media shall not be employed to the advantage or disadvantage of any political party or candidate at any election.”

Furthermore, the 2013 Political Parties Code of Conduct had provided that, “All parties shall discourage their members in government from using their power of incumbency to the disadvantage of other parties or their candidates during campaigns.” The earlier 2011 Political Parties Code of Conduct in paragraph 9 stated that all political parties shall separate party business from government business. As such, political parties shall not utilise public resources for any party activity and shall not permit any of its sponsored candidates holding public office to use public resources for the purpose of political campaigning in elections.

In this report, we detailed some instances where the state’s fiscal resources were deployed to advance the interest of political parties and the parties the government in power chose to support in the 2023 Presidential and National Assembly Elections in Nigeria.

1.1. Police arrest Rivers PDP Rep member with \$498,100:

On the eve of the 2023 Presidential Elections, Hon. Chinyere Igwe, a member of the House of Representatives on the platform of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) was arrested with bundles of dollars along Aba Road, Port Harcourt very early on Friday morning, February 24, 2023. The police while confirming Igwe's arrest gave the total sum as \$498,100 USD, along with a list of people the monies are meant for. Igwe is a strong loyalist of the Presidential candidate of the PDP, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar and others said he was picked by operatives of the command in a stop and search operation on Port Harcourt-Aba expressway while driving home, Thursday night.

The PUNCH reported that the Atlantic Television Network and Wish FM 99.5 located in the same building in Ozuoba, Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State which belonged to the lawmaker were earlier attacked with dynamites, with many properties destroyed.¹ The Spokesperson of the Rivers State Police Command, Grace Iringe-Koko, said Igwe explained that it was operatives deployed to the Independent National Electoral Commission office along Aba Road in Port Harcourt that caught the lawmaker with the cash.

The police statement read, "Police Officers from Rivers State Command deployed to INEC Headquarters Aba Road today 24/2/2023 at about 0245hrs, while on stop and search, arrested one Hon Chinyere Igwe, member House of Representatives representing Port Harcourt II Federal Constituency with a cash sum of \$498,100 USD inside a bag in his car. Also recovered was a list for distribution of the money. The Assistant Inspector General of Police (Election) AIG Abutu Yaro, has ordered swift interrogation and arraignment in court. The Command urges all contestants and political parties to comply strictly with provisions of the Electoral Act and other relevant laws."

No doubt, the botched currency redesign of the Central Bank of Nigeria which had caused huge Naira had driven desperate politicians to resort to using foreign currencies to induce voters during the elections.

1.2. Kogi State Assembly Candidate Arrested With N326m, \$610,500 Cash

Earlier in November 2022, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) arrested a Kogi State House of Assembly candidate of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP), Ismaila Yusuf Atumeyi, with N326 million and \$ 140,500 cash. He is also contesting the Ankpa 11 Constituency in the State Assembly in the 2023 state assembly elections.

Spokesman of the anti-graft agency, Wilson Uwujaren, told Daily Trust that one Abdumalik Salau Femi, a former bank employee, was arrested in connection with the fraud alongside one Joshua Dominic, an alleged serial fraudster, in a sting operation at Macedonia Street, Queens Estate, Karsana, Gwarinpa, Abuja. The report said that Femi supplied the inside information that facilitated the attack on a bank by the syndicate.

¹ Punch Newspapers: "Polls: Police arrest Rivers Rep member with \$498,100" available at <https://punchng.com/breaking-polls-rivers-rep-member-arrested-with-foreign-currency/> accessed on 24 February, 2023.

Femi was picked up Tuesday, November 1, 2022, at Radisson Blu Hotel in Lagos. Following his arrest, a search was conducted on his home in Morgan Estate, Ojodu where a total of \$470,000 USD was recovered. The arrest of the suspects followed months of investigation into the hacking of one of the commercial banks by a syndicate of fraudsters who pulled off a heist of N1.4billion. The syndicate allegedly moved N887 million into the account of Fav Oil and Gas limited, from where the monies were paid to several Bureau de Change operators and some auto dealers for exchange into United States Dollars and purchase of high-end cars. The EFCC added that Dominic, a self-styled investment expert and managing director of Brisk Capital Limited was arrested in May 2021 by the Special Fraud Unit of the Nigeria Police for alleged N2billion investment scam. He allegedly defrauded over 500 persons in a phony investment scheme. Two Range Rover Luxury SUVs were also recovered from the two suspects arrested in Abuja. They will be charged to court as soon as the investigation is concluded.

1.3. APC Party Agent Distributes Soaps, Salt to Voters on Election Day in Jos:

In Jos, Plateau State, at Dawaki Unit B Polling Unit, it was observed that agents of the ruling All Progressives Congress were sharing laundry soaps and table salts to voters at the polling unit on Presidential and National Assembly Elections Day on February 25, 2023 to influence their voting choices. This was in flagrant violation of instant electoral laws.

Other election monitors noted that there were 10 reported cases of restrictions on political activities across four local governments, and 13 reported cases of groups barred from using public spaces for campaigns and 52 reported cases of vote buying across 15 local governments of the state.²

1.4. ICPC Arrests Man With N2m Cash In Bauchi:

On February 25, 2023 the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC), arrested one Hassan Ahmad with N2 million cash piled in a bag while driving in a tinted Hilux vehicle from Bauchi State to neighbouring Gombe State. ICPC suspected that the cash was meant to be delivered to an unnamed political gladiator in Gombe for possible vote-buying. The anti-graft agency, who took to its verified Twitter handle, said Ahmad was intercepted by men of the 33 Artillery Brigade Operation Safe Conduct deployed to Alkaleri local government area of Bauchi State.

The suspect, according to the commission, was in possession of N900,000 new notes and N1.1million old notes. The commission added that the funds were being conveyed in a tinted black Hilux vehicle with registration number JMA 85 AZ. "The funds, packed in a 'Ghana Must Go' bag, comprises six bundles of one thousand naira new notes of N600,000; six bundles of five hundred naira new notes of N300,000, and old two hundred naira notes of N1.1 million,"

² Daily Post "2023 election: 52 cases of vote buying in Plateau" available at <https://dailypost.ng/2023/02/16/2023-election-52-cases-of-vote-buying-in-plateau-group/>, accessed on February 28, 2023.

ICPC tweeted. The commission stated that the suspect had confessed that the money was being moved to Gombe for a politician, adding that investigations were underway.

1.5. EFCC Arrests Vote Buyers in Benue, Kano, FCT, Zamfara:

On February 26, 2023, the EFCC announced that it arrested Cletus Tyokyaa, director-general of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) governorship campaign council in Benue State, for alleged vote buying.

In a statement on Saturday, the agency said Tyokyaa was arrested at the RCM polling unit in Daudu, Guma LGA of the state, with the sum of N306,700 in various denominations stashed in his car. It said Tyokyaa, who is also a lecturer at the Sarwuan Tarka University (formerly known as the University of Agriculture), Makurdi, the state's capital, could not provide a logical explanation for visiting the polling unit. "Luck ran out on the suspect when he drove to the voting centre which was different from his polling unit and tried to run upon sighting operatives of the Commission," the statement read. When asked about his mission at the center, Dr. Tyokyaa could not provide a coherent explanation, leading to arrest, and the search of his car revealed the money in various denominations."

In a related development, the EFCC said it arrested a man for alleged vote buying with N194,000 at the Gidan Zakka polling unit, Goron Dutse area of Kano Municipal LGA, Kano state.

It also arrested a party agent buying votes through bank transfers in Abaji in the federal capital territory (FCT), while two persons named Stanley Nsemo and Eno Amponsah were arrested in Calabar, Cross River state with the sum of \$450 and N156,800 on suspicion of alleged votes buying.

The EFCC said its operatives intercepted a woman with 18 voter cards in a sting operation in Badarwa area of Kaduna state. The anti-graft agency said the woman, Maryam Mamman Alhaji, who is a member of the support group of one of the leading political parties, also had in her possession a 17-page list containing names of eligible voters, their bank details and phone numbers as accredited under Badarwa/Malali Ward 01 and 08, Kaduna North LGA of Kaduna state.

"She was nabbed after undercover operatives pretended they had voter cards and were desperate to sell them. She is currently being grilled by operatives of the Kaduna Zonal Command of the EFCC, with a view to unraveling other members of her syndicate whom she claimed are also collecting voters' cards and paying monies through PoS or direct bank transfers," the EFCC said.

On February 25, 2023 the EFCC also arrested two alleged vote buyers in Gusau, Zamfara State. While Mustapha Abubaka was arrested with the sum of N107,000 (One Hundred and Seven Thousand Naira) only in one thousand naira denomination and tickets specially designed for voters as evidence for voting his party before collection of the money, Isa Abdullahi was

arrested for buying votes with wrappers concealed in the boot and back seat of a Peugeot 406 saloon.

1.6. ICPC Nabs Nine For Vote Buying In Osun, Ondo, Others

On Saturday February 25, 2023 the ICPC arrested nine persons for in Osun, Ondo, Borno, Akwa Ibom and Sokoto States vote buying during the presidential and national assembly elections. In a statement that Saturday, the Commission said “Four vote buyers were arrested by the Osun State Office of the ICPC, two persons were arrested by the Sokoto State Office while one person each was arrested by the Ondo, Akwa Ibom and Borno Offices of the anti-graft agency.” It added that the four vote buyers arrested in Osun State are Adewale Teslim, 32 years; Yemi Adebisi, 42 years; Shake Idris, 36 years; and Emiola Joseph Oluwole, 69 years.

1.7. Kogi State Governor And Executive Excesses Of Road Cutting:

February 24, 2023, SaharaReporters said that operatives of the Kogi State Command of the Nigeria Police Force intercepted workers of Chinese construction firm, CCECC, allegedly engaged by Governor Yahaya Bello-led State government to cut off roads leading to Kogi Central Senatorial District.³

The plot, it was learnt, was to prevent the officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), security agents and other stakeholders from accessing the senatorial district during the Saturday presidential and National Assembly elections. It was gathered that more community roads in the state were excavated including Ege road, Obangede road and Old Ihima-Lagos (Ikare) road. It was learnt that the CCECC Loadbed and Excavator with company equipment number tag were used by the construction firm for the Ege-Ihima road excavation. Governor Yahaya Bello has admitted to destroying major roads leading to Kogi Central senatorial district, home to opposition senatorial candidate Natasha Akpoti, on the eve of crucial presidential and parliamentary elections.

Mr Bello defended the move as a preemptive measure to stop terrorists from unleashing havoc on the people of Kogi State, citing a bomb blast that occurred on December 29, during a visit by President Muhammadu Buhari.

“One of the measures arrived at was to restrict the number of routes to the flashpoints to enable security agents to properly mount effective surveillance on the other access roads for the safety of the people,” said a statement signed by Kingsley Fanwood, Commissioner for Information and Communications in the state, on February 24.

³ Sahara Reporters “General Elections: Car Crashes On Roads Cut Off By Construction Firm Hired By Governor Bello-led Kogi Government” available at <https://saharareporters.com/2023/02/24/general-elections-car-crashes-roads-cut-construction-firm-hired-governor-bello-led-kogi>, accessed on February 26, 2023.

Ms Akpoti, who wields significant influence in parts of the state, had described the excavation of roads leading to localities considered her strongholds as politically motivated. The excavation on election night, according to Ms Akpoti, was a deliberate attempt to prevent electoral officials from getting to the five local government areas in her senatorial district. Ms Akpoti further asserted that the excavation would make it difficult for security personnel to reach and rescue her in the event of an attack.

Mr Bello is not on the ballot but hopes to secure majority votes in Saturday's poll for candidates of his ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) party. The Kogi governor has on several occasions pledged his allegiance to Bola Tinubu, the presidential candidate of the APC. "Let me further reassure millions of Nigerian youths and Nigerians, our followers and supporters across the world that I remain a very supportive, ardent supporter, mobilizer, campaigner, and driver of votes for our leader and president in the waiting Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu," Mr Bello said in an interview in January.

1.8. EFCC Arrests 17 in Kano and Katsina Over Vote Buying

The EFCC on February 26, 2023 arrested 17 people suspected of vote buying in Kano and Katsina States. The EFCC Kano Zonal Commander, Farul Dogondaji, told the News Agency of Nigeria that 16 of the suspects were arrested in Kano and one in Katsina. Dogondaji said that six suspects were apprehended in the Tofa and Ungogo local government areas with bags of rice and semovita.

"We also arrested 10 suspects at Kofar Danagundi and Kwalli Primary School in the Municipal Local Government Area," he added. Dogondaji said one suspect was apprehended with 60 wrappers in the Bakori Local Government Area of Katsina State, adding that all the suspects were arrested while attempting to share the items to influence voters during the presidential and National Assembly elections.

1.9. How APC Senator Uses Women Groups For Subtle Vote Buying In Gombe

Barely a week before the presidential and national assembly elections on Saturday February 25, 2023, Senator Sa'idu Ahmed Alkali, the lawmaker representing Gombe north under the All Progressives Congress (APC), distributed sewing, grinding and noodles-making machines to poor and vulnerable women populations in Dukku, Funakaye and Gombe LGs in an alleged attempt to attract their votes, according to a report by Sahara Reporters.⁴

⁴ Sahara Reporters "How APC Senator Uses Women Groups For Subtle Vote Buying In Gombe" available at <https://saharareporters.com/2023/02/24/how-apc-senator-uses-women-groups-subtle-vote-buying-gombe>, accessed February 27, 2023.

With the new CBN currency redesign policy leading to a widespread cash crush, politicians like Senator Alkali, through a political group, Arewa Women for Tinubu and Inuwa, re-strategised their vote-buying antics by handing gifts to voters in exchange for their votes.

Zainab Muhammad, Gombe State Coordinator of Arewa Women for Tinubu and Inuwa told WikkiTimes (as reported by Sahara Reporters) that in the last two weeks, with support from Senator Alkali, her team in a series of visits to 11 federal wards in Gombe LGA, distributed sewing, grinding and noodles producing machine to poor selected women to get them to vote for the lawmaker and other APC candidates during the polls. “Two weeks ago, we paid a visit to communities under Gombe LGA and distributed food items to 200 women. We gave them beans, soya beans, a gas cooker and N20,000 each. This is to empower them and enable them start up their businesses,” she said. When pressed further, the coordinator grudgingly admitted that the distribution of the items is not solely for empowerment’s sake, but also designed to induce the low-income beneficiaries to vote for Senator Alkali, Governor Inuwa Yahaya and Bola Tinubu respectively at the polls. “Senator Saidu Ahmad Akali, himself, paid a visit to Funakaye local government. He distributed noodles processing machines, fridges and grinding machines to vulnerable women. Some of the women received training in poultry farming and were given chicken feed and medicines as startup capital,” she said.

Such gift is against article 127 of the Electoral Act 2022, as amended, which states that: A person who — (a) corruptly by his or herself or by any other person at any time after the date of an election has been announced, directly or indirectly gives or provides or pays money to or for any person for the purpose of corruptly influencing that person or any other person to vote or refrain from voting at such election, or on account of such person or any other person having voted or refrained from voting at such election; or (b) being a voter, corruptly accepts or takes money or any other inducement during any of the period stated in paragraph (a), commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a fine of N100,000 or imprisonment for a term of 12 months or both.

For Balkisu Abdullahi, one of the women leaders in Pantami ward of Gombe LGA, any woman who accepts gifts and refuses to vote APC would not be forgiven. However, she did not disclose the plans they put in place to track their beneficiaries that failed to vote for Senator Alkali and other APC candidates.

“We are distributing these items so APC candidates across the board can emerge winners in the forthcoming elections,” she said enthusiastically, trusting their subtle votes-buying strategy. She added, “A lot of women have benefitted from these recent palliatives. We can only appreciate our beneficiaries if they come out and vote for APC across all the political seats. You see these women, my wish is their command. They cannot refuse to vote for APC. We have done so much for them.”

Bilkisu said the lawmaker last week gave the women of Mallam Sidi, a community in Gombe, sewing machines, refrigerators, gas cookers, and grinding machines. Fatima Abdullahi, one of the beneficiaries that received the lawmaker’s gifts, said it was the first time she would get such a gift from a political officeholder, thus disclosing she would vote for him. “I have never been given such a big gift. I am definitely voting for Senator Sa’idu Alkali and all other APC

candidates at the polls because I can't repay them otherwise. I want to use my vote to thank them again," she said. Similarly, Sadiya Abdullahi, Aisha Pantami and Aishatu Abubakar have also pledged their votes in exchange for the gift, like many other women.

1.10. EFCC Arrests Man With N194,000, Bags of Rice and Semovita at Gidan Zakka

Operatives of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, in the early hours of Saturday February 25, 2023 arrested 17 people suspected of vote buying in Kano State. KANO FOCUS reported that Zonal Commander, Farul Dogondaji told journalists that six suspects were apprehended in Tofa and Ungogo Local Government Areas with bags of rice and semovita.⁵ "We also arrested 10 suspects at Kofar Danagundi and Kwalli Primary School in Municipal Local Government Area," he said.

He said that all the suspects were arrested while attempting to share the items to influence voters during the presidential and national assembly elections. He added that another person was also arrested for alleged vote buying with N194,000 at Gidan Zakka polling unit, Goron Dutse area of Gwale Local Government, Kano. The EFCC commander said the suspects will be charged to court after investigation.

1.11. EFCC Intercepts N32.4m in Lagos:

On Friday, February 25, 2023, the EFCC intercepted the sum of N32,400 million allegedly suspected to be used for vote buying in Lagos State. The spokesperson for the EFCC, Wilson Uwujaren, in a statement, revealed that the recovery was made by operatives of the Lagos zonal command of the commission. He noted that the suspect involved has been taken into custody for further questioning.

1.12. Vote Buying Recorded In Kogi LGA

There was massive vote buying in some polling units under the Kogi Local Government Area of Kogi State. DAILY POST reported that party agents allegedly induced voters with money to vote for their candidates.

At Ukwo Koton Karfe unit 001 with 735 registered voters, party agents were spotted following voters to the voting cubicles before they cast their votes. Despite the presence of some security

⁵ Kano Focus "Vote buying: EFCC arrests man with N194,000 at Gidan Zakka" available at <https://kanofocus.com/2023/02/25/vote-buying-efcc-arrests-man-with-n194000-at-gidan-zakka/>, accessed February 27, 2023.

agencies such as Nigeria Police, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corp, Road Safety, the party agent are having a free day to gain votes for their candidates.⁶

Similar situations played out at Ukwon Koton Karfe Units 003, comprising 1001 registered voters and Ukwon Koton Karfe Units 004 with 683 registered voters.

1.13. Vote Buying: Party Turns To Bank Transfers Amid Cash Crunch

Amid scarcity of naira notes, Nigeria's ruling political party – the All Progressives Congress (APC) – is not resting on its oars to induce the impoverished electorates financially to vote their candidates in the forthcoming general election amid the controversial naira swap policy of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), the Business Day newspapers reported.⁷

Amid expectation that the current cash crunch would suffice in stifling vote buying, an APC youth leader in one of Nigeria's southeastern states told BusinessDay that his party has since collated their members account and PVCs details as well as that of their followers and new converts for onward financial gratification during the election. This, he said, is more pronounced in the rural areas where the ruling party agents are asked to leverage transfers to pacify the electorates due to scarcity of naira notes.

Just recently, Fisayo Soyombo, a Nigerian investigative journalist and founder of the Foundation for Investigative Journalism (FIJ) tweeted, "He told @FIJNigeria he noticed on the portal that N10,000 was deposited in his wallet. He withdrew the sum and was surprised to receive a credit notification from his bank. CONFIRMED: APC is crediting voters with N10,000 online in exchange for their data. This information is true. A neighbour told me about how people are exchanging their PVC for N10,000," Adefemi Grant, one of his followers on Twitter also tweeted on February 10, 2023.

Another of his followers, Bazooka Academy, an educationist/writer also tweeted on February 10, "At Iyana Iba today on Lagos, an old man actually was telling an estate agent that he received a credit alert of 10k from APC. I thought he was lying. These people are innovative in crime and corruption but can't deploy same innovation into building the nation," said OD-SIT, another of Soyombo's Twitter followers.

Commenting on this development, Victor Kanu, a financial analyst in Lagos said "There is no significant implication. It won't work because they can't reach the number of people they would like to reach. Also, the CBN plans can minimise the rate of vote buying but can't totally eradicate it. Did you not see that APC shared old notes yesterday," he noted.

⁶ Daily Post "Nigeria Decides: Vote buying recorded in Kogi LGA – Journalists" available at <https://dailypost.ng/2023/02/25/nigeria-decides-vote-buying-recorded-in-kogi-lga-journalists/> accessed February 28, 2023.

⁷ Business Day "Vote buying: Party turns to bank transfers amid cash crunch" available at <https://businessday.ng/politics/article/vote-buying-party-turns-to-bank-transfers-amid-cash-crunch/>, accessed February 28, 2023.

A consultant who didn't want her name in print said "It is not a new tactic. The naira redesign has more than meets the eye. The bigwigs or their proxies have the CBN, banks (all kinds), and even where it is printed under their control. They can't be cash trapped. The target is the poor, impoverish them further to the point they have no choice but to do what you want. I'm talking about the poor, not the uncomfortable," she said.

1.14. Ogun Governor, Abiodun Distributes Old Naira Notes To Residents Amid Allegations Of Hoarding Banknotes, Solicits Votes For Re-election

A video obtained by SaharaReporters captured the moment an agent of Governor Dapo Abiodun of Ogun State distributed old Naira notes to residents of the state as inducement ahead of the 2023 general elections.

The governor's agent shared the old notes in envelopes branded with the governor's picture to residents, convincing them to ensure they vote for his re-election. "These notes remain legal tender, the governor is coming (for enforcement if banks reject them)," the agent told women who claimed that the banks would reject the notes from them.

Mr Abiodun, along with his counterparts in Lagos and Kaduna, as well as some other state governors, has steadfastly opposed the president's and the CBN's directive on the validity of old naira notes.

The governors have insisted that the old notes remain legal tender until the Supreme Court issues its decision on the matter. Ten governors who oppose the president's directive also petitioned the Supreme Court over the weekend, seeking a declaration that President Muhammadu Buhari and the Central Bank of Nigeria's insistence on withdrawing the N1000 and N500 notes from circulation violates an earlier ruling of the court ordering all parties to maintain the status quo.

Political analysts are divided in their assessments of the situation. While some see the latest suit against President Muhammadu Buhari's government and the CBN as a test of democracy, others see it as pure political self-interest, accusing Governor Abiodun and his colleagues of seeking a free reign of political lawlessness and electoral malpractice during the elections. The APC governors challenging the Buhari government have been accused of opposing the CBN policy to spend the money they had hoarded to influence the election.

1.15. Residents Receive N2,000 To Vote For Tinubu In Sokoto

A resident of Wamakko Local Government, Sokoto State, told Sahara Reporters that political actors in his community promised all residents N2,000 if they voted for the All Progressives Congress (APC) presidential candidate, Bola Tinubu.⁸

⁸ Sahara Reporters "We Were Given N1000 To Vote Buhari In 2019; Now It's N2000 For Tinubu – Sokoto Resident Alleges" available at <https://saharareporters.com/2023/02/02/we-were-given-n1000-vote-buhari-2019-now-its-n2000-tinubu-sokoto-resident-alleges>, accessed on February 28, 2023.

In a conversation with SaharaReporters on Wednesday February 2, 2023, Mallam Ango said that it was a usual practice in his community for people to demand money before voting in any of the general elections. He said they were promised N2000 per head to vote for Tinubu, an increase from the N1000 they were promised to vote for Buhari during the 2019 general elections. He said the increment could be due to the competition the APC now faced in the state from the Peoples Democratic Party.

Meanwhile, the Director General of the Atiku/Okowa Presidential Campaign Organization (APCO), Governor Aminu Tambuwal of Sokoto State had also alleged that the APC was amassing money to buy people's votes ahead of next month's elections. Though his party, PDP, is also notorious for inducing voters with money during elections, Tambuwal rubbed the allegations of vote-buying on the APC in January in the Binji local government area of Sokoto State while he was on the third leg of a statewide campaign on behalf of the PDP.

1.16. Lagos State Government Pays 533 Pensioners N1.2bn Two Weeks to Election

Lagos State government on March 1, 2023 announced that it has paid N1.2 billion accrued pension rights to 533 retirees just less two weeks to the March 11, governorship and state assembly elections. The government explained that the payment aligned with Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu's mandate to clear the pension backlog. Speaking at the 99th Benefit Bond Certificates Presentation for retirees of the State Public Service, the Director-General of Lagos State Pension Commission (LASPEC), Mr. Babalola Obilana, reassured the pensioners of Sanwo-Olu's commitment towards the well-being of the state workforce and said that the money will be transferred to their Pension Fund Administrators (PFAs) in a week.

1.17. Sanwo-Olu Entices Lagos Youths With Cryptocurrency Approval Few Days To Election, Release Impounded Vehicles Free-of-Charge

Despite the indefinite ban placed on cryptocurrency commercial trading by the Buhari regime and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), Lagos state governor, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, is enticing youths in the state by floating the idea of cryptocurrency approval as he embarks on missions to canvass votes in a bid for re-election.⁹ With only few days before the gubernatorial election, which was earlier scheduled to hold on Saturday March 11 but now shifted by a week to March 18th to allow the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) reconfigure the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) machines, Sanwo-Olu has embarked on policy changes to entice young voters in Lagos.

A part of a video released by the governor ahead of the election which is expected to be a tightly-contested one involving two other leading candidates, Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour of the

⁹ Peoples Gazette "Sanwo-Olu entices Lagos youths with cryptocurrency approval few days to election" available at <https://gazettengr.com/sanwo-olu-entices-lagos-youths-with-cryptocurrency-approval-few-days-to-election/> and accessed March 9, 2023.

Labour Party and Abdul-Azeez (Jandor) Adediran of the People's Democratic Party, Mr Sanwo-Olu said his government is committed to creating an enabling environment for cryptocurrency to thrive despite a ban on such.

"... and techpreneurs, we are committed to working with all stakeholders to promote the growth of tech and blockchain industry including cryptocurrency in Lagos state. We are proud of the achievements of our young people and we believe their success is a testament to the potential of our state, Mr Sanwo-Olu said in the clip as he continues on a journey to win people over.

In one of such moves, the Lagos state government had, last week Saturday, commenced the process of releasing impounded vehicles to their owners free of charge without payment of fines, a move the state transportation commissioner, Dr Frederic Oladeinde said is to relieve Lagosians of the crunch of naira redesign policy.

The Buhari regime, through the CBN, had in February 2021 placed an indefinite ban on the trading of cryptocurrencies and ordered commercial banks to block any accounts caught in the activities, claiming the digital currency is used for money laundering and terrorism, in a decision that sparked massive outcries from mostly young Nigerians.

1.18. Obaseki Approves 2022 Promotions For Edo Civil, Public Servants

In an apparent move to sway voters, on March 7, 2023, Edo State governor, Godwin Obaseki, approved the immediate promotion of all civil and public servants in the state whose promotions were due in 2022. This came just weeks after the ruling Peoples Democratic Party lost to the Labour Party in the state's results of the Presidential and National Assembly elections.

In a statement, the Edo State Head of Service, Anthony Okungbowa, said the directive is in line with the government's commitment to the prompt and regular promotion of civil and public servants. Okungbowa noted that Edo was the first state to approve the promotions, which is coming in the second month of the year. He said: "No other state in Nigeria has approved promotions this year, not even the Federal Government. So, this is a major milestone and the governor deserves accolades for prioritising the welfare of workers. Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) are by this announcement directed to commence and conclude the process of the promotion of eligible officers without delay."

1.19. Ikpeazu Approves Promotion Of Abia Civil Servants

On March 9, 2023 ahead of the March 18 governorship election, Abia State Governor, Okezie Ikpeazu approved the promotion of civil servants in the state. This coming from a state government that the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) said owes 117 months of salaries arrears to workers in different agencies and institutions and 30 months of pension benefits to pensioners in the state. The 117 months according to NLC is owed to Abia workers accordingly: 3 months' salaries to Local Government employees, 23 months' salary arrears to the staff of

ABSUT, 13 months to HMB, 11 months to secondary school teachers, 3 months to Primary School teachers, 30 months to Abia Polytechnic workers, 29 months to Abia College of Education workers, 5 months to Abia College of Health Sciences and 30 months pension benefits.¹⁰

But speaking with the civil servants at the International Conference Centre in Umuahia on Thursday March 9 2023, Ikpeazu also directed that the contentious Annual Leave Allowances for the workers of the state civil service be paid within the next seven days and appealed to them to vote massively for the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) governorship candidate, Okey Ahiwe.

Ikpeazu assured that Ahiwe would sustain his achievements and implement the welfare packages of the civil servants as well as perform better than himself. According to the governor, the March 18 poll is as important as the lives of the people of Abia hence it should be taken very seriously. He said that if any worker votes for the wrong person, he will have gambled with his job and the future of his family.

1.20. Wike To Employ 10,000 Youths, Approves Workers Promotion

Also on March 9, 2023 Rivers State Governor Nyesom Wike approved the promotion of the state's civil servants and employment of 10,000 youths into the civil service. The governor said he had forwarded the list of members of the Civil Service Commission immediately to the House of Assembly for screening to enable the commission oversee the process.

Wike said this when he hosted a delegation, led by the chairmen of the state branch of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC), Alex Agwanwor, and the Joint Negotiating Council (JNC), Emechete Chuku, at Government House in Port Harcourt, the state capital. The governor blamed the former NLC leader in the state for the delay workers experienced in getting their due promotion, stressing that with the new NLC executive in place, promotion would be implemented for workers expeditiously.

1.21. Desmond Elliot Donates 8 Transformers to Surulere Days to Election

The actor, who represents Surulere Constituency I in the Lagos State House of Assembly and still vying for the same position for the third time, surprised constituents with his last-minute favour in an apparent move to appease the people of Lagos and his constituency in particular days before the election. The one-time Nollywood star, who is currently vying for a 3rd term in the House of Assembly under Surulere constituency with APC donated eight transformers to his local government area. Desmond Elliot's last-minute gesture nine days before elections held the

¹⁰Tribune "Ikpeazu owes 117 months' salary, 30 months' pension to Abia workers and pensioners — NLC" available at <https://tribuneonlineng.com/ikpeazu-owes-117-months-salary-30-months-pension-to-abia-workers-and-pensioners-%E2%80%95-nlc/> and accessed March 10, 2023.

internet in a frenzy as Nigerians lashed their displeasure on him after the politician took to social media to state his excitement about the project: "I am excited to announce that new high-capacity transformers have been installed in Surulere, bringing reliable electricity to communities that have long needed it."¹¹

1.22. LASTMA Officers Beg For Forgiveness Over Years Of Maltreating Lagosians

On March 11, 2023, officials of the Lagos State Traffic Management Authority (LASTMA) asked residents of Lagos to forgive the agency for maltreating them over the years, according to a report by Peoples Gazette. In a video recording, some officials of the agency were filmed dancing to the rhythm of a song "ewe orijin laja, eni aba se ko firijin wa", meaning "whoever we must have offended, please forgive us."

At the event, the officers who were seen wearing uniform and others on casual, bowed as a sign of begging for mercy. Some civil servants in Lagos have alleged that they were threatened that they could lose their jobs if they refused to re-elect the incumbent governor.

However, Gboyega Akosile, media aide to Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu, debunked the news on his social media page. Mr Sanwo-Olu of the All Progressives Congress, will on March 18 contest for the governorship of Lagos with the Labour Party's Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour, Funso Doherty of Africa Democratic Congress and Abdulazeez Adediran of the Peoples Democratic Party, as well as 11 others.

1.23. Dapo Abiodun Shares Expired COVID-19 Palliatives, N5,000 To Ogun Civil Servants

Governor Dapo Abiodun on Saturday March 11, 2023 began sharing expired foodstuff to civil servants in Ogun State as part of his moves to solicit their support for his second term bid.¹² The foodstuffs, Peoples Gazette gathered, is part of the COVID-19 palliatives earlier withheld from the citizenry by the state government.

The governor also authorised the disbursement of N5,000 to the state workers on Wednesday, funds which were a part of the federal government's relief package. Mr Abiodun's actions has brought him under fierce criticisms by the civil servants who bemoaned the expired state of the

¹¹ Leadership Newspaper "OAP Dotun Slams Desmond Elliot For Donating Transformers Days To State Elections" available at <https://leadership.ng/oap-dotun-slams-desmond-elliott-for-donating-transformers-days-to-state-elections/> and Legit.NG "A Very Thoughtful Farewell Package": Desmond Elliot Donates 8 Transformers to Surulere Days to Election" available at <https://www.legit.ng/entertainment/celebrities/1524363-a-thoughtful-farewell-package-desmond-elliott-donates-8-transformers-surulere-days-election/> and accessed March 13, 2023.

¹² Peoples Gazette "Dapo Abiodun shares expired COVID-19 palliatives, N5,000 to Ogun civil servants" available at <https://gazettengr.com/dapo-abiodun-shares-expired-covid-19-palliatives-n5000-to-ogun-civil-servants/> and accessed March 12, 2023.

shared food items. The Gazette learnt that sugar, salt, rice and garri were distributed. However, the foodstuffs already had black spots, a sign of fungal growth, which made them unfit for consumption.

A spokesperson for the governor, Kunle Somorin, did not respond to requests for comments. Several food items were distributed in 2020 in joint efforts by the federal government and private donors, who sought to relieve the impact of the economic slowdown on the populace. The objectives of the gesture were, however, thwarted by some state governors and politicians, who piled up the food items in warehouses away from the reach of ordinary Nigerians.

2. Instances Of Abuse In The Use Of State's Coercive Power On Opponents

2.1. Gunmen Kill, Burn LP Senatorial Candidate and Supporters In Enugu

On Wednesday, February 23, just before the election scheduled to hold on Saturday, gunmen attacked and killed Oyibo Chukwu, the candidate of the Labour Party (LP) for the Enugu east senatorial district election. The media reported that he was killed at Amechi Awkunanaw in Enugu South LGA of Enugu when gunmen opened fire on his convoy. The gunmen were also said to have killed five of his supporters who were with him in the car.

Chijioke Edeoga, the Enugu LP governorship candidate said the car conveying Chukwu and his supporters was set ablaze after they were killed.

"It is true that our senatorial candidate for Enugu East senatorial district for Saturday's election has been killed. They (gunmen) shot him and five others and set them ablaze. Our party members are being targeted for assassination by political parties that felt threatened by the rise of the Labour Party in the state and are afraid they may lose Saturday's election," he said.

Daniel Ndukwe, the spokesperson of the Enugu police command, could not be reached to comment on the incident at the time of filing this report. Chukwu's death comes weeks after the office of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Enugu south LGA was attacked by gunmen.

2.2. DSS Raid On NNPP's Kano Secretariat Sparks Controversy

The Kano state chapter of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) has accused the Department of Security Services (DSS) of intimidating its members and carrying out raids on its campaign offices in the state on just days before the Presidential Elections.¹³

¹³ Daily Trust "DSS Raid On NNPP's Kano Secretariat Sparks Controversy" available at <https://dailytrust.com/kano-nnpp-kicks-as-dss-accuses-it-of-stockpiling-arms/>, accessed February 25, 2023.

But the secret police said it has been neutral in carrying out its duties and it has offered all political parties equal opportunities, saying it only retrieved dangerous weapons from campaign offices of some politicians. The allegation by the NNPP, a leading opposition party in the state, comes just a few days after the party accused the police leadership in the state of working with the state government to harass and arrest its members.

Few days later, the IGP redeployed the commissioner of police in the state to Plateau state and posted two new CPS and three Deputy CPs to oversee the state during the election; but the police said the redeployment had nothing to do with the allegation as it also affected other commands.

When contacted, the spokesman of the DSS, Peter Afunanya, told Daily Trust that its personnel only retrieved dangerous weapons like guns, swords, daggers, jackknives, among others from some politicians.

Afunanya, who sent some pictures of dangerous weapons including clubs, cutlasses and guns said to have been recovered from the property in a chat with the newspaper correspondent via WhatsApp, asked, "Are these campaign materials?" He said, "The property was searched with a warrant. This is not a true account of what happened. The DSS in Kano didn't intimidate any political party in that state. "The Service is neutral and has offered all the parties equal opportunities to carry out their activities. It however, carried out a legal security operation and valid search on a suspected property and recovered dangerous weapons including a gun, swords, daggers, jack-knives, among others. The Service is committed to a violent free environment before and after the elections," he said.

2.3. Police Arrest House Of Representatives Majority Leader, Doguwa, Over Alleged Killing, Burning Of NNPP Office In Kano

The Majority Leader of the House of Representatives, Alhassan Ado Doguwa was arrested by the police for his alleged role in the killing of several persons and burning of the secretariat of New Nigeria People's Party (NNPP) after the Presidential and National Assembly Elections.

The police earlier said that at least three persons were killed when the campaign secretariat of the NNPP in Tudunwada was set ablaze. Two persons were also burnt to death during the crisis that broke out as the collation of the results of the Doguwa/Tudunwada House of Representatives election were being collated.

According to the reports¹⁴, the lawmaker was picked up at the Mallam Aminu Kano International Airport while he was about to board a flight to Abuja. The police in Tudunwada said Doguwa personally led the thugs that burnt the NNPP secretariat where at least two persons were burnt to death.

¹⁴ Sahara Reporter "Police Arrest House Of Representatives Majority Leader, Doguwa, Over Alleged Killing, Burning Of NNPP Office In Kano, Northwest Nigeria" available at <https://dailytrust.com/kano-nnpp-kicks-as-dss-accuses-it-of-stockpiling-arms/>, accessed February 27, 2023.

2.4. Police's Muted Trumpet On MC Oluomo And The Polling Unit Dogs

On February 25, 2023 the International Centre for Investigative Reporting, ICIR, is an independent, news agency in Nigeria reported that there were instances of voter intimidation and ethnic discrimination in some polling units across Lagos State by some persons supporting the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), despite the presence of security officials.¹⁵ Voting was largely peaceful in the state but some videos emerged showing pro-APC supporters insisting on the party or tribe that can be allowed to vote in some polling units. In one of the videos seen by The ICIR, the head of the Lagos State branch of the National Union of Road Transport Workers Musiliu Akinsanya, popularly known as MC Oluomo, could be heard threatening to resist any Igbo who attempted to vote. "Any Igbo wen dem born well, make e come vote again; me I dey here," MC Oluomo said as a police officer standing by tapped him on the back as if trying to appease him as voters stood watching to see what would happen.

A second video captured a man clearly telling voters they would only be allowed to vote for the APC party. "If you no fit vote APC for here, go your house. Nobody force you come here. I go come check am. If I see you vote another party, you go enter one chance. We no come joke for here," the unidentified man yelled.

Political thugs supporting the ruling party also disrupted voting at Oba Yekini, Elegushi Street; Ikate, Lekki; Akinyele street in Aguda, Surulere and Fadeyi areas of Lagos state, scattering ballot boxes and interfering with the election process, in the presence of security men.

Reacting to the MC Oluoma video, the Lagos Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Benjamin Hundeyin, said that the video would be investigated. "While the video will be investigated to know if it's an old, recycled one or not, it should be noted that this is criminal and totally against the Electoral Act, 2022. Violators will be prosecuted," Hundeyin said.

However, when voters who had experienced violent intimidation and suppression at the Presidential and National Assembly Elections touted the idea of using dogs as personal security in the next governorship and state assembly elections, the police was swift and unequivocal in their condemnation of the idea.

The Force Public Relations Officer, CSP Olumuyiwa Adejobi warned Nigerians against the use of pets, especially, dogs, at polling units on election day, saying such an act runs contrary to the provisions of the Electoral Act 2022, as amended. He said that the provision of Section 126 (1) of the Electoral Act 2022, explains clearly those actions exhibited by the electorate that constitute electoral breaches and are punishable under the law, and paragraph (f) mentions the possession of weapons calculated to intimidate voters and electoral officers. According to him, "Dogs could be classified as offensive weapons as their owners/handlers can use them to intimidate, harass and cause assault and bodily harm to others. The Dogs Act, CAP 55 Laws of

¹⁵ ICIR "MC Oluomo caught on camera intimidating, discriminating against non-indigenes of Lagos" available at <https://www.icirnigeria.org/mc-oluomo-caught-on-camera-intimidating-discriminating-against-non-indigenes-of-lagos/> and accessed on March 2, 2023.

the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1958 as domesticated in various states, and other criminal laws in Nigeria are trite. The conceived ideas and plans by certain individuals, electorate, and groups of people to go to the polls accompanied by pets are unacceptable, stand discouraged, and remain an act of electoral infraction as it will cause harassment and intimidation.”

3.0. Conclusion

In the last two decades, several pathological phenomena such as local strongmen, godfathers and dynasty politics have emerged in Nigeria’s democracy. Present reality in Nigeria has shown that the existence of electoral democracy has not automatically presented democratically social and political orders. The change of power through the electoral mechanism still presents oligarchic elites who hijack and ultimately dominate the democratic system.