



CONFERENCE OF HEADS
OF MAINLINE CHURCHES
IN OSOGBO

Press Conference Address of the Most Rev John Akin Oyejola, the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese Osogbo and Chairman of the Forum of Mainline Bishops in Osogbo at the High-Level Religious Leaders Dialogue with Political Stakeholders in Osun State on Pre-Election Security Assessment and the Official Opening of the JDPMC Election Vigilance Dashboard Ahead of the 2026 Osun Gubernatorial Election

All distinguished leaders and representatives of institutions of state, of political parties in Osun state, of Civil Society Organizations, my brothers in fellowship Muslim and Christian leaders in Osun, gentlemen of the press.

We Christian and Muslim leaders who have been working with you and with government for several years, observe with deep bitterness how Osun state is gradually sinking into political violence. And those of you here with us at this gathering are catalysts of politics in Osun state.

We all agree that Nigeria is plagued by aggressive violence that is robbing us of human lives and destroying communities daily. Such acts of violence include banditry, kidnapping, insurgency, and all forms of religious and ethnic agitations. Osun state is distinguished as one of the most peaceful states in Nigeria and many persons who are weary of violence in other parts of the country see our state as a place of refuge.

It is however tragic to note that while the state is free of all such terrors, Osun is cast in the image of the most politically violent state. This very unfortunate trajectory forces us to pause and ask ourselves fundamental questions. Are our political stakeholders' part of the people of this state? Are they the same people who kneel with us before the cross of Christ to pray every Sunday? Are they the same people who gather with the brethren on Friday to face the holy city of Mecca to invoke the mercy of God? Should they not be pierced to the heart if they have true human conscience when they realize that those human beings whose lives are violently cut short for political reasons are part of those who were with them at prayer either in the mosque or the church? Political interest in Osun is degenerating into obsession as indicated by how cheaply virtue and conscience simply erodes in Christians and Muslims once political interest is at stake.

Insurgency is already spreading to the frontiers of southwest Nigeria. The sad case of the children and teachers in Oyo state who are still in captivity, the numerous cases in Kwara are indications of these. These mostly occur in remote geographically disadvantaged communities far from state

structures. In situations like this, we expect that security resources available to the state would be deployed to such communities to prevent the entry of insurgency into Osun state. Unfortunately, politicians are perpetrating violence around the relatively secure main cities making it impossible for security agents to focus on the peripheries. Local intelligence is as well almost impossible to coordinate in the absence of functional local government administrative structures.

We the religious leaders in the State feel deeply saddened by the deplorable state of our Local government administration. Hardship has intensified in Osun because national and state welfare policies are not benefitting the common man. Local government structures that have the capacity to contextualize such policies of government to effectively address local needs have been paralyzed because of political interests. We wish to state that political leaders in Osun and from Osun state including the president have betrayed the people and we feel disappointed in their reluctance to deploy their extensive political sagacity, their omoluabi and religious virtues to conscientiously resolve the crisis rocking our local government administration for over 18 months. Court judgements are insufficient to ensure justice and peace once stakeholders do not prioritize common good and explore decent political compromises that will benefit the majority of the people especially the weak and the poor.

Let it be known to perpetrators of undemocratic politics in Osun that we religious leaders are aware of and publicly denounce the rise personality cult is Osun politics in which individuals form a coercive cultic followership that suppress and dominates political party structures thereby destroying and destabilizing democratic order. It is important for such individuals to be aware also that their undemocratic and sometimes inhumane tracks are very clear and can be read in the context of their persons even if they make them look like political party affairs. We are aware as much as the rest of the world that all acts of political thuggery, political violence and electoral frauds in Osun are the misdeeds of cults of political personalities in the garb of political parties. As the welcome initiative of state police continues to gain traction in the nation, we feel very disturbed about the possibility that it could easily be deployed to the service of personality cults in Osun state.

We condemn in strong words the tragic rise of violent militia arms in partisan politics in Osun state. Extensive report from JDPMC, the media and other credible sources have indicated that since Osun began off-cycles gubernatorial elections, major political parties are alleged to engage violent secret cults to advance their political interests. Some renowned violent thugs are alleged to be agents in the service of eminent political figures in Osun states. These are the merchants of bloodshed and excessive political violence in Osun state. We cannot keep watching while our innocent brothers and sister are wasted in violent bloodshed just for the attainment of personal political interest.

Election Sensitization

Records from JDPMC reports have indicated very low sensitization of the people by the National Orientation Agency and Civil Society regarding the coming election. We are worried that only the political parties are the major stakeholders carrying out sensitization. While we commend these very few political parties for carrying out their statutory obligations, we call on all other stakeholders to be conscious of the need for multi-stakeholders' involvement in political education. If left to few political parties alone especially the major political parties, we risk having citizens whose mentality about politics is colored by bias towards certain political interest rather than political neutrality and objectivity.

Passionate Appeal on the way Forward

We call on all our elders, religious leaders, traditional rulers, intellectuals, noble-minded elites and groups in Osun state to use all lawful and morally upright means at their disposal to see to the permanent erosion of personality cult in Osun politics. Political party supremacy must be reinforced and given firm foundation in Osun politics. It belittles our collective sense of worth to watch helplessly while the destiny and wellbeing of a people in a democracy is tossed around violently by personal interests, unchecked appetite for power, and ill-moderated ego of individuals. This excessive pride and exaggeration of ego must be denounced as completely alien and inimical to the ethos and values of omoluabi for which Osun is renowned.

The same attention must be given to the unchecked violent political militias. Those among the elites who are shielding political thugs with blood-stained swords in Osun from the arm of justice must be identified and brought to limelight. Swift response from security agents in Osun state should send quick signals to merchants of bloodshed that Osun is not a market where violence is exchanged for money and power. We appeal to parents and communities in Osun to form and cater for their children as is expected to ensure that they are not accessible to be initiated into violent groups and made instruments of political desperations.

We call on the national leadership of the Inter Party Adversary Council to see to the restoration of statutory leadership and reinforcement of its Osun state branch. This would make it possible for peaceful resolution of inter-party conflicts and the proper employment of political solutions where necessary.

Political sensitization is the responsibility of both state and non-state actors. We all, including religious bodies have inalienable responsibilities to ensure proper political education of our people. Abandoning political enlightenment of the citizenry to politicians alone is inimical to democracy. National Orientation Agency must intensify its activities on impartial public orientation. The media especially private-owned media are called to make more sacrifice in their efforts in public orientation on politics. Elites and people of goodwill should support media houses in this regard given the high cost of running media hubs where there is very poor power supply. Our churches and mosques must make places for sound political education.

Finally, we put a strong challenge to the political elites of Osun to see to the restoration of local government administration in Osun before the gubernatorial election. As religious leaders, we remain neutral in the matter. We are united behind one purpose, and it is to see to the permanent resolution of the political logjam that has incapacitated local government service to the people and so plunged the common man into poverty and vulnerability to insecurity. The resolution of this problem will significantly serve as a prove of their patriotism and genuine interest in the growth and progress of Osun state.

Given the robust and frank dialogue by this gathering, we look forward to significant improvement in the political atmosphere ahead of the election in August.

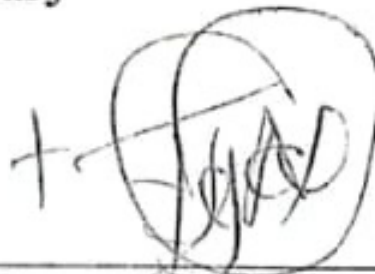
Thank you all for your attention.



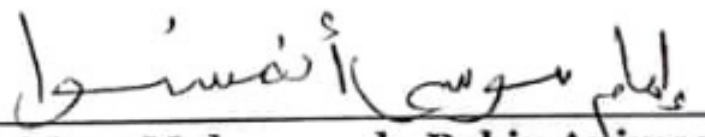
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