***DAILY***

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**INEC URGES NASS TO EXPEDITE ACTION ON PASSAGE OF ELECTORAL OFFENCES COMMISSION BILL**

**The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has called on the members of the National Assembly to expedite action on the passage of the National Electoral Offences Commission bill into law.**

The Commission expressed belief that the establishment of the Offences Commission would lead to more successful prosecution of offenders who may not be limited to ballot box snatchers but also include falsifiers of election results and vote buyers at polling units and most importantly, their sponsors.

 Chairman of INEC, Prof. Mahmood Yakubu made the call at a Public Hearing organised by the House of Representatives Committee on Electoral Matters, held on Tuesday 23rd August, 2023, at the National Assembly premises, Abuja.

 Prof. Yakubu who maintained that the reform of our electoral process cannot be complete without effective sanctions on violators of the laws, recalled that the call for the establishment of an Electoral Offences Commission has been part of all national conversations on constitutional and electoral reforms for the last 13 years.

 He said “the Justice Mohammed Uwais Committee on electoral reforms recommended it in 2009, echoed by the Sheikh Ahmed Lemu Committee following the post-election violence of 2011 and, most recently, by the Senator Ken Nnamani Committee on Constitutional and Electoral Reform in 2017.”

 The Chairman also further recalled that “similar recommendations are contained in reports of police investigations, INEC administrative enquiries, court judgments, reports by the National Human Rights Commissions as well as several accredited election observers”.

He harped on the challenge of prosecuting electoral offenders before INEC and the modest successes recorded in that regard. According to Prof. Yakubu, “at present, INEC is saddled with the responsibility of prosecuting electoral offenders under the Electoral Act. This has been very challenging for the Commission. For instance, since the 2015 General Election, 125 cases of electoral offences were filed in various courts out of which 60 convictions have been secured so far, including the most recent one in Akwa Ibom State”.

 “The Commission would like to see more successful prosecution of offenders, not just ballot box snatchers, falsifiers of election results and vote buyers at polling units but most importantly, their sponsors. We look forward to the day when highly placed sponsors of thuggery, including high-profile figures that seek to benefit from these violations, are arrested and prosecuted. We believe the work of the proposed Commission will help in this regard”, the INEC Chairman expressed.

 Prof. Yakubu decried the huge volume of work before the Commission, which he explained have been encumbrances to the achieving more successes in the prosecution of electoral offenders. He said “much as the Commission would like to see more successful prosecution of offenders, our effort is hampered by obvious constraints”.

 “ INEC is basically an electoral Commission with extensive responsibilities which include the registration and regulation of political parties, the monitoring of party and campaign finance, their primaries, congresses, meetings and conventions; nationwide Continuous Voter Registration (CVR) and the maintenance of the national register of voters; creation of polling units; delimitation of electoral constituencies; voter education and publicity; management of electoral logistics; recruitment, training and deployment of election duty officials.”

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