



NEWS
RELEASE

MERCY CORPS ALREADY OBSERVING POLITICAL VIOLENCE AHEAD OF NIGERIA'S ELECTIONS

Intra-party disagreements over candidates, declining trust in institutions signal strong likelihood of continued unrest

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ABOUT MERCY CORPS

- Leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible
- Empowering people to survive through crisis, build better lives and transform their communities for good
- Meeting the urgent needs of today through emergency response and disaster preparedness
- Building a stronger tomorrow by connecting people to the resources they need to strengthen their community from within
- About 5,000 team members reaching nearly 22 million people
- \$436.6 million total operating revenue in FY2017; 87% channeled directly into programs in more than 40 countries

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ABUJA, Nigeria – The global organization [Mercy Corps](http://mercy Corps.org) is already seeing outbreaks of violence in the lead-up to Nigeria's elections for the presidency and National Assembly in February 2019. Warning signs foreshadowing continued unrest include the weak credibility of electoral institutions and intra-party disagreements. The proliferation of weapons is also worsening violence, particularly between farmers and herders in the Middle Belt region, and between criminal gangs across the country.

"The window is quickly closing to mount effective election violence prevention strategies," says Darius Radcliffe, Nigeria Country Director for Mercy Corps. "Intra-party disagreements over candidates during the primaries are a major signal for violence as aggrieved candidates are likely to use violence and intimidation before and after the election."

As part of Mercy Corps' efforts to help prevent violence, the organization, along with 17 other civil society and religious organizations in Nigeria, sent a [letter](#) to U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo last week urging the State Department to take action to ensure a peaceful, credible election in Nigeria. U.S. engagement in 2015 contributed to Nigeria's first relatively peaceful transfer of presidential power.

"We have observed declining confidence in the Independent National Electoral Commission's ability to administer free and fair elections, and this lack of confidence is likely to trigger contested results" says Radcliffe. "The behavior of the security forces also will be key. Will they be used to intimidate supporters of the opposition party? Or will they help tamp down potential violence?"

Mercy Corps is currently integrating election violence prevention efforts into its ongoing peace-building programs throughout Nigeria. In Northern Nigeria, the organization is working with religious leaders to develop scenario plans for their communities. Religious leaders have committed to monitoring polling stations and holding joint sermons at interfaith events to persuade community members to support a peaceful and fair election. In the Northeast, Mercy Corps is sharing positive civic engagement messages through local media channels and local governance committees. In the Middle Belt region, Mercy Corps is inviting representatives of political parties to conflict prevention forums to form peace pacts with communities that are in line with local traditions.