

# Police, Residents Worry Over Political Violence In Kano

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By Zahraddeen Yakubu Shuaibu

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**A few days before the 2023 presidential election, there is a heightened fear of political violence in Kano State. The situation is fast degenerating to the point that even security operatives are raising concerns.**

People are even more worried given that this is coming just before the election days, with many people losing their lives and others sustaining injuries, Daily Trust has learnt.

It was also gathered that there are several reports of political clashes in different forms, either among the candidates themselves, their spokesmen, or through thugs.

With its strategic position as the state with the highest voting population in the North, other states in the region have regard for Kano politics and its politicians, hence its significant influence in the country's political system.

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Aside from this, the presence of a former governor of the state, Rabi'u Musa Kwankwaso, on the presidential ballot as the candidate of the New Nigeria Peoples Party (NNPP) and the support the candidate of the APC, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, enjoys in the state, especially with the state governor, Abdullahi Umar Ganduje, have further heated up the polity.

Party leaders and their candidates, especially gubernatorial and National Assembly contestants, have in several instances signed peace accords brokered by different stakeholders, including civil society organisations (CSOs) and the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), where all of them have committed to maintaining peace and order, especially during campaigns, with some of them saying they even carry along their children to campaign rallies to show their commitment to making the entire process a peaceful one.

The party leaders have also been severally invited by the police to brainstorm on the issues and proffer solutions to stem political violence.

However, despite all these promises and warnings from the police and other security agencies, cases of violence during campaigns have persisted.

The violence had hitherto been largely recorded among supporters of the two major political parties in the state; the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the NNPP, but a new dimension entered the frame about a week ago when the gubernatorial candidate of the Action Democratic Party (ADP), Sha'aban Sharada, flagged off his campaign with members of his campaign trail clashing with supporters of the APC.

Before then, the NNPP had accused the APC and its chairman in Kano, Abdullahi Abbas, of mobilising thugs to attack their supporters in Gwale LGA of the state.

However, the APC debunked the claim through its campaign spokesman, Comrade Muhammad Garba, saying, rather, it was NNPP supporters that attacked their supporters.

What, however, remained undeniable was that several people were left with various degrees of injuries.

On the clash between the ADP and APC supporters, Abbas Yusha'u Yusuf, spokesman of ADP's campaign council, insisted that his principal "is one of the most peaceful candidates."

"But when we flagged off our campaign, some thugs were sponsored by the ruling party to attack our members, and some vehicles were burnt. We have raised this concern with the security agencies and reported the matter to them."

He said his boss is committed to a peaceful campaign and conduct of the election.

Amidst these clashes, residents from across the state have continued to raise concerns. According to them, almost all the major parties in the state moved around with a large number of thugs carrying weapons.

### **How I lost my son to thugs — Mother**

"I lost my son to political thugs at a rally. They came with thugs carrying dangerous weapons while my son was going to his work place. He normally went to school every morning, and after school he would go and sell sachet water.

“He didn’t do anything, he was just walking by the roadside when they stabbed him in the heart; he died instantly,” the bereaved mother, Balaraba Musa, who lost her son recently, said.

Other residents in the Kurna area said when politicians visited their areas for campaign, they were threatened by their supporters with weapons.

A mother of seven, Hajara Abdullahi told Daily Trust that “when they both came here (APC and NNPP), their thugs were carrying weapons. We were very lucky that day, our children would have been attacked. They were just leaving school when the thugs came in, and they had to go back.

“Honestly, with this kind of movement, people will boycott elections. Nobody will risk his life with these kinds of thugs coming just for campaigns.

“The way and manner in which the politicians hold their campaigns is alarming. They move around with thugs; they engage in war of words and use of weapons. This is just at campaign level, imagine election day,” a community youth leader, Abdulaziz Lawal, lamented.

According to him, the politicians can change the situation by talking to their supporters, “otherwise there will be a serious problem.”

Other residents lamented that thugs were also taking advantage of the political rallies to attack them and snatch phones and other valuables.

Many of the people said they were robbed of their phones while waiting in traffic when politicians and their supporters passed through their areas.

Meanwhile, law-abiding citizens are not the only ones complaining about the situation, as security agencies have started issuing warnings about the threats ahead of the elections.

They lament that politicians no longer caution their followers to maintain peace and order before, during and after the elections as earlier promised.

The police, in their drive against political violence in the state, recently arrested 61 thugs at the Sani Abacha Stadium during the presidential campaign rally of the APC.

They also arrested 93 thugs during the campaign rally of the PDP at the same stadium and other hideouts. The police also said all the suspects were arrested with weapons, including drugs and Indian hemp.

In addition, the state command read a riot act to political party leaders in the state, calling on them to warn their supporters against political violence, as there is no alternative to peace.

The Commissioner of Police, Mamman Dauda, warned political party leaders and thugs who may be planning to attack one another during the campaign to desist forthwith.

Speaking during a meeting last week with political party leaders in the state on the need for peace and peaceful coexistence, the commissioner said the meeting was as a result of reports of clashes amongst political parties during campaigns.

### **What politicians must do – Prof. Fage**

A political analyst and lecturer with the Department of Political Science, Bayero University Kano, Professor Kamilu Sani Fage, has said unless the politicians and authorities concerned unite and develop an approach to addressing the challenges, there would be problems in the elections.

According to him, Kano is known for radical politics and political thuggery which scenario, he said could mar the elections.

“Unfortunately now politicians are using thugs which makes it a household problem that is worrisome to everybody here in Kano. From the look of things, these elections are probably going to be marred by such violence.

“Even though there have been concerted efforts to reduce the violence, but with the kind of hate speeches from the politicians, there are signals that violence is going to manifest itself in Kano,” he said.

Proffering solution to the situation, the analyst said though there are barely a few days to the election, there is a need to intensify public awareness campaigns against political violence.

“Secondly, the authorities should take a stand on the issue. Lastly, the politicians should shun the act. They should always emphasise the need for peaceful rallies and campaigns among their supporters,” he said.