

TEXT OF PRESS CONFERENCE BY ITSAKIRI ETHNIC NATIONALITY ON THE SUPREME COURT ORDERED DELINEATION OF ELECTORAL WARDS/POLLING UNITS OF THE WARRI FEDERAL CONSTITUENCY BY THE INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION (INEC) AND THE ON GOING CONTINUES VOTERS REGISTRATION. (CVR)

ITSEKIRI ETHNIC NATIONALITY REJECT THE PURPORTED PROPOSED FRESH WARDS (RA) AND POLLING UNITS DELINEATION ARISING FROM THE FEILD WORK DONE BY THE INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION (INEC) FOR NOT COMPLYING WITH THE 1999 CONSTITUTION OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA (AS AMENDED), ELECTORAL ACT 2022 AND INEC CRITERIA / GUIDELINES FOR FRESH DELINEATION OF WARDS/REGISTRATION AREAS AND POLLING UNITS IN WARRI FEDERAL CONSTITUENCY

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen of the press, we have invited you to this press conference today, to address and correct some of the false narratives being sprung and sprouted out by some Ijaw and Urhobo of the Warri Federal Constituency.

On the 2nd of December 2022 the Supreme Court, in Suit No. SC/143/2016: Hon. George Timinimi & ors VS Independent Electoral Commission (INEC), directed Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) as follows:

“An order of this Honourable court compelling the Defendant, its Agents, servants, privies and assigns to conduct a fresh delineation of all that electoral wards/polling units of Warri South-West, Warri North and Warri South local Government Areas of Warri Federal Constituency in Delta State for the purpose of future elections”

This was not implemented before the 2023 General election

The above decision of the Supreme Court was given on the only live issue in the suit, which is the prayer with regard to section 114 CFRN 1999(1) which provides that:

“(1). The Independent National electoral commission shall review the division of every state into Constituencies at intervals of not less than ten years, and may alter

such Constituencies in accordance with the provisions of this section to such extent as it may consider desirable in the light of the review.”

Consequently, since the last delineation of electoral wards and polling units was done more than ten years ago, it ordered INEC to conduct delineation of electoral wards and polling units in the Warri Federal Constituency.

It must be noted that the only other reason for the delineation of Wards and Constituencies is in section 114(2) of the Constitution as amended which states that:

“(2). The Independent National electoral commission (INEC) may at any time carry out such a review and alter the Constituencies in accordance with the provisions of this section to such extent as it considers necessary in Consequence of any alteration of the boundaries of the state or by reason of the holding of a census of the population of Nigeria in pursuance of an act of the National Assembly .“

None of the events mentioned In section 114(2) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as has occurred.

Contrary to the claim of Honourable George Timinimi and ors in the suit and that of the Ijaw and Urhobo of Warri Federal Constituency, the Supreme Court did not at any time in the judgment declare or hold that the wards and polling units of the Warri Federal Constituency are fake and fictitious. It did not also hold at the INEC voters register is fake and fictitious.

Outside the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended, the only legal instrument to guide INEC in their enforcement of the Supreme Court judgment is the provisions of section 40(2) of the electoral act 2022, which provides clarity on what INEC is expected to do using the electoral register of voters

That is:

“(2). The commission shall establish adequate number of polling units in each registration area or electoral ward and shall allot voters to such polling units.”

INEC constitutional mandate are primarily geared towards facilitating the smooth, efficient, and credible conduct of elections across the Federation. Its mandate, in this

regard, is administrative and operational within the context of elections. This did not extend to or include

- (a) The creation, recognition, or alteration of communities or local Government Areas;
- (b) Conduct of population census;
- (c) Ethnic profiling of the various local Government demographic, boundaries adjustments for local Government and state, and
- (d) As a court of law to determine which ethnic groups owns where.

INEC has done ALL of the above in their field work by embarking on the compilation of the list of communities in Warri South-West, Warri North and Warri South local Government Areas in the Warri Federal Constituency of Delta State.

Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC's) engagement in such *ultra vires* acts amount to usurpation of powers and a clear act of administrative overreach which is not supported by law.

Accordingly, INEC can only rely on empirically valid voters register (which includes bio data) in its records and geophysical spread of same in the implementation of the Supreme Court judgment.

In exercising its power of Constituency, ward and polling units delineation or alteration the commission must rely on the provisions of the Electoral Act, section 40(2).

The Constitution does not empower the INEC to act on the basis of contrived and unofficial population figures, arising from aerial views, Google maps etc. It also does neither empower INEC to determine ownership of territories nor does it empower it to create any imaginary communities as INEC had done in their field work. To do so would not only violate the clear intent of the constitutional provisions but would also undermine the legal integrity and credibility of the electoral process.

Therefore, any attempt by INEC to act outside these prescribed conditions would render such action *ultra vires* and constitutionally invalid.

FALSE CLAIMS OF THE IJAWS AND URHOBOS ON POLITICAL REPRESENTATION AT THEIR WORLD PRESS CONFERENCE

Some Ijaw and Urhobo at their World Press Conference that they are denied electoral representation. It must be stated for the records Itsekiri have been very magnanimous in conceding to the Ijaw and Urhobo representation in Warri Federal Constituency. In Warri South-west, for example, the Deputy Governor under the Okowa administration is KINGSLEY OTUARU from Gbaramatu in Warri South-west local Government Area.

The only seat in the Delta State House of Assembly is today occupied by the current Speaker of the Delta State House of Assembly is from the same Gbaramatu. The current Chairman of the Warri South-west local Government Area is of Ijaw extraction and in addition they also have counsellors representing their various wards.

In Warri North LGA the last local Government chairman before the current one Honourable Smart Asukutu is of Egbema Ijaw extraction and in addition the Ijaws also have counsellors representing their various wards.

In Warri South LGA of the two seats of the state house of assembly one of the seats have been severally occupied by the Urhobo.

Despite this high profile political representation in Warri Federal Constituency the Ijaw and Urhobo will not relent until they take all that belongs to Itsekiri without regard to the Itsekiri majority status in the three Warri local Government Areas of the Warri Federal Constituency.

We want ask the Ijaws and Urhobos to tell the World in simple terms how much political representation have been given to Itsekiris domiciled in the their predominant local governments such as Ethiope West, Burutu, Sapele Local Government Areas.

It is also not true as stated in their press conference that:

“The gerrymandering upon which the 1999 General election was conducted in Warri Federal Constituency was grossly skewed against the Ijaw and the Urhobo indigenous peoples of Warri Federal Constituency”

In the Warri 1992 polling units, wards, state and Federal Constituency delineation exercise held nationwide in Nigeria using the same parameter (contrary to the undefended claim in supreme court suit No. SC/413/2016 that ordered fresh delineation in Warri Federal Constituency), Warri had the following Constituencies:

- I. Two Federal Constituencies occupied by two Itsekiri persons and
- II. Four state of assembly Constituencies

In the same vein, electoral ward in the two existing Warri local Government area at the time is as follows:

- I. Ten wards for Warri south: 7 for Itsekiri, 3 for Urhobos
- II. Ten wards for Warri North; 6 for Itsekiri, 4 for Ijaw (which includes current Warri south-west local Government Area

In the 1996 LGA creation and ward delineation exercise; Warri North was split with Warri south-west carved out of warri North

The ward delineation in the two LGAs that were hitherto together are as follows;

- I. Warri North: 6 for Itsekiri, 4 for Ijaws
- II. Warri south-west: 6 for Itsekiri, 4 for Ijaw

These wards were created by national electoral commission (NEC) and it was its prerogative to do so at the time and it was nationwide exercise

In the 1999 Constituency delineation exercise, INEC retained the 4 state of assembly Constituencies for Warri but reduced the federal Constituencies from two to one. The seat taken from the Itsekiri people was given to the Ijaws of Burutu. This action which reduced Itsekiri representation at the house of representatives from two to one has put the Itsekiri people at a serious political disadvantage in the state till date. The Ijaw and the Urhobo of warri Federal Constituency did not see anything wrong in the above injustice.

It is also most fallacious as stated in their ward press conference that;

“It is important to draw your attention to the fact that it is the failure of INEC to address these imbalance that led to the Warri crisis, which unfolded in two phases:

1997-1999 and 2002-2003 involving conflicts between Ijaw and Itsekiri, and Urhobo and Itsekiri.”

The whole world is aware that it was the issue of location of the headquarters of the newly created Warri south-west local Government Area which was put at Ogidigben (Itsekiri area) as contained on the national schedule of local Government headquarters till date and the illegal relocation to ogbeh-Ijaw by the Delta State government that was the root cause of the crisis. The crisis referred to above was a coordinated genocide program to eliminate the Itsekiri people from their homeland relying on the Ijaw majority support from all over Delta State and beyond and Urhobo of the other eight (8) local Government Area of Delta State.

In the cost of this press interview we shall invite expert in geographic information survey to critically review of the independent national electoral commission (INEC) proposed fresh polling units and wards (RAs) delineation, arising from the field work done. Release on 4th April, 2025 at Asaba in Delta State with notes

Findings after the plotting and overlay of the INEC generated coordinates shows that

1. WARRI SOUTH-WEST LGA has 1287 PU inside the LGA; 510 PU are outside the LGA and 1 PU fall in EDO STATE. PU289 named TURUFAGBENE FALL IN EDO STATE
2. WARRI NORTH LGA has 609 PU inside the LGA; 6 PU are outside the LGA and 99 PU are outside Delta State falling into ONDO and EDO States. PU651 IS FALLING IN BENIN RIVER. Some of the PU are not found to be in habitable areas like inside the river and in bushes and swamps area. We have cases of PU falling in ETHIOPE LGA and SAPELE LGA
3. WARRI SOUTH LGA has PU 4, PU 5 and PU 16 are not within the LGA. Even PU 16 named MEROGUN of Warri south LGA as displayed on the INEC list, it is located in Deco Road Axis different and far away from MEROGUN .

In the cause of the expert presentation, sheets of survey plans where all the INEC listed coordinates are well displayed and de IN SITU checks proved skewed and spurious.

The above findings shows that INEC as exceeded it constitutional mandate and it is in violation and not complying with the 1999 constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria (as amended). electoral act 2022 and criteria / guidelines for fresh delineation of wards/registration areas and polling units in Warri federal constituency.

Therefore Itsekiri ethnic nationality reject the purported proposed fresh wards (RA) and polling units delineation arising from the field work done by the independent national electoral commission (INEC).

We Hereby call on the Federal government to thoroughly investigate and prosecute INEC official that has compromised the integrity of the exercise for causing great embarrassment to the commission.

OBJECTIONS TO INEC's FIELD REPORT ON DELINEATION

We have raised serious objections to INEC's Field report on the Delineation of Warri Federal Constituency. Our objects had been forwarded to the National Security Adviser and INEC and published in some of National newspapers. We have also some meetings in which our misgivings objections were robustly defended.

Therefore, our objections are in the public domain

The main reasons for criticism have been alluded to in this press statement. We are willing to answer questions and elucidate on any grey areas that you may have.

We expect our objections will be taken into careful consideration by INEC in reaching an equitable, fair, just and, most of all, LAWFUL decision.

CONTINUOUS VOTER REGISTRATION (CVR)

While, we are waiting for the results of consultations and INEC decision, we cannot understand the desire of the Ijaws and Urhobos to link these mutually exclusive events (delineation and continuous voter registration). One does not, by every conceivable parameter, see how one stops the other.

Perhaps they are still looking at the results of CVR with analogue eyes or they are parties to rascality evidenced in the "Field Report"

Therefore, we condemn, in its entirety , the threat of Ijaws and Urhobos of the Warri Federal Constituency at their press conference, to peace and security.

We deprecate in the strongest possible terms, particularly their threat to shut down strategic oil/gas facilities, as well as other national assets by acts of vandalism, sabotage or attack.

We would have said this is their usual tactic when they are on a dodgy wicket.

We urge INEC to disregard their threats of boycotts and sundry unsavoury and criminal acts.

CVR is the legal and or constitutional right of every citizen of the Federal Republic of Nigeria who has attained the age of 18.

it is an opportunity for those who want to change their voting location, whose voter card is destroyed and those who want to change the information contained in their earlier registration to regularize their rights to vote and be voted for.

Gentlemen and ladies of the press we thank you for your patience and audience we will now entertain some questions from the press.

Thank you again!