

To flee or not to flee

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Many Nigerians fear there will be serious violence whoever “wins” the (s)election on 14 February.

We have form in this sort of thing. About 500 people, mostly in northern Nigeria, were estimated to have died after Goodluck Jonathan was declared the winner in 2011. They were allegedly angry that Muhammadu Buhari lost out.

Buhari is running again and the opposition to Jonathan is stronger than in 2011. So the rioting if he loses again would most definitely be worse.

It was grossly irresponsible of Imo governor Rochas Okorocha to claim that the (s)elections would be peaceful this time and it would be “uncalled for” for any Igbos in the north to return home.

I doubt if anyone is listening to him.

Some Nigerians abroad have been told by their family back home not to return around voting day and beyond. Some of the seriously loaded have planned “holidays” abroad with their families around voting day. There is talk that people are moving money in Nigerian banks to foreign accounts.

That said, certain things are guaranteed in Nigeria.

- (S)elections will be rigged.
- There will be riots in northern parts by the almajiri (street urchins).
- The “loser” will not accept the result.

I think there would be little voting in the parts of northeast Nigeria afflicted by Boko Haram violence. Post election violence is likely to be minimal in such areas. But the rest of the north, even as far down as Abuja, must come with severe security warnings from February 14 onwards, unless Buhari is declared the winner. I would advise against travel to such areas and suggest anyone there capable of leaving should do so. Your life is more important than whatever is keeping you there.

I doubt if there would be rioting anywhere in the south, regardless of the result. Some are claiming that Niger Delta militants would kick off if Jonathan lost. I think they would only do so if Buhari came in and cut off the slice of the oil money that Goodluck has pushed their way since the "amnesty".

Port Harcourt boy Rotimi Amaechi, the governor of Rivers State is said to have planned his escape from Nigeria if Goodluck wins. He expects to end up in jail partly for corruption and partly for crossing swords with Patience Jonathan. Amaechi has acquired an estate in the Caribbean that is said to be the size of a village for his exile from Nigeria.