

Nasarawa State Elections Scenarios and Recommendations

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Disclaimer: The following analysis is based on discussions with State-level actors and so reflects their perceptions, not the view of the Peace and Security Working Group. These scenarios were produced prior to the 2014 primary elections and are thus subject to change. Where relevant, updates have been made to reflect evolving dynamics.

Nasarawa At-a-Glance

Current Governor	Umaru AI-Makura
Current Ruling Party	All Progressives Congress (APC), formerly Congress for Progressive Change (CPC)
Key February 2015 Elections	Presidential, Gubernatorial, National Assembly elections, State House of Assembly.
Prognosis	Nasarawa State is listed as one of the most volatile and high risk states (red category) in the CLEEN's latest report.

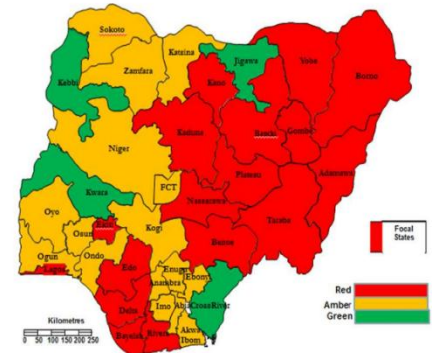


Figure 1: CLEEN Map of Hot Spots for Election Violence

Nasarawa Violence Data

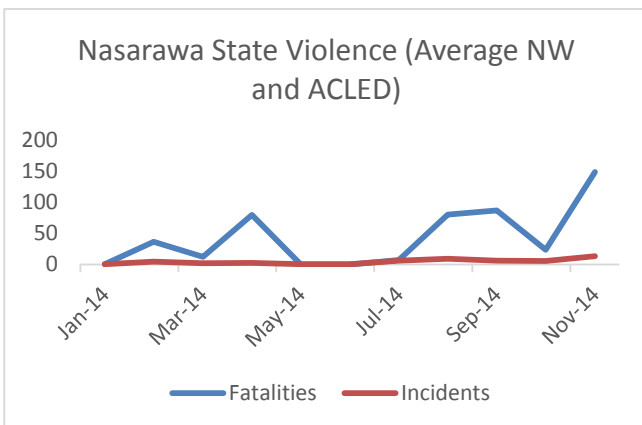


Figure 2: Peace Map (www.p4p-nigerdelta.org)

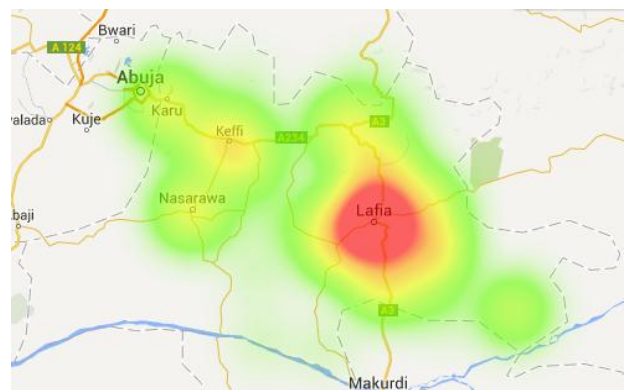


Figure 3: Violence Heat Map Jan 2009-Dec 2014



Key Political Developments

In general, there is a perception that the conduct of the 2011 elections was an improvement on previous electoral cycles.¹ Compared to the 2007 voters' register, there was an increase of approximately 40% in registered electors in Nasarawa State in 2011.² In a survey of public opinion carried out in 2012, 81% of respondents in Nasarawa reported that the quality of the April 2011 elections was better than the previous round of elections in 2007 (compared to the national average of 65%); while 16% reported that they were worse (in line with national averages).³ Nevertheless, 16% of respondents in Nasarawa characterized the national elections, as 'not free and fair' – higher than the national average rate of around 10%; 6% characterized the gubernatorial and state assembly elections as 'not free and fair' – compared to a national average of around 10%.⁴ In spite of improvements in procedural practices, the elections were accompanied by high levels of unrest, with USIP characterizing the election cycle as Nigeria's 'best run, but most violent.'⁵

Nasarawa has a history of relatively low levels of political violence, although its conflict environment is marked by considerable volatility: long periods of relative calm and stability are punctuated by sharp escalations in violent conflict.

Historical conflict events have tended to centre on dynamics such as:

- Inter-religious tensions between Christian and Muslim communities;
- Inter-communal clashes ethno-linguistic livelihood groups (often involving semi-nomadic pastoralists and settled agricultural populations, or disputes over fishing rights), including clashes which resulted in the displacement of over 400 families in the state in February 2010, and extremely violent clashes in May and June of 2001 between members of the Tiv, Jukun and Fulani communities, in *Figure 3: Violence Heat Map Jan 2009-Nov 2014* which over 200 people were reportedly killed;⁶
- The escalation of political or social protests or demonstrations into riots and violent clashes, including protests in October 2011 by Muslim residents of Lafia against police disruption of prayers;⁷
- Clashes over issues of contested land ownership;⁸
- Frequent incidents of banditry, in which attackers have killed police and civilians in ambushes.⁹

Nasarawa State also has a history of violence surrounding elections. Sporadic outbursts of violence occurred in advance of the 1999 polls, when Nasarawa was listed among twelve states declared 'hot spots' of potential unrest by the authorities.¹⁰

The 2003 elections to the state House of Assembly witnessed marked violence, in which the State Commissioner for Women's Affairs and several other people were killed in Toto local government area, when the Commissioner had returned to her home

¹ Human Rights Watch, *Nigeria: Post-Election Violence Killed 800*, 16 May 2011; International Crisis Group, *Lessons From Nigeria's 2011 Elections*, Africa Briefing No. 81, 2011, p. 1.

² European Union Election Observation Mission, *Final Report: General Elections April 2011*, p. 23.

³ Afrobarometer Data, Nigeria, Round 5, 2012, Q79A-NIG.

⁴ Afrobarometer Data, Nigeria, Round 5, 2012, Q28, Q28B, Q28C.

⁵ United States Institute of Peace, *Nigeria's 2011 Elections: Best Run, but Most Violent*, Peace Brief No. 103, 15 August 2011.

⁶ Source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset (ACLED), www.acleddata.com.

⁷ Source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset (ACLED), www.acleddata.com.

⁸ Nigeria Watch, *Third Report on Violence in Nigeria (2006-2011)*, [http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/html/NGA-Watch-Report11\(1\).pdf](http://www.nigeriawatch.org/media/html/NGA-Watch-Report11(1).pdf), p. 14.

⁹ Source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset (ACLED), www.acleddata.com.

¹⁰ International Crisis Group, *Lessons From Nigeria's 2011 Elections*, Africa Briefing No. 81, 2011, p. 3.



area to vote. Reports of the incident indicate that the Commissioner was killed in the context of ongoing inter-ethnic conflict in the area, by community members who were unhappy about her appointment to a state government position. Human Rights Watch reports that the Commissioner was allegedly killed ‘in the presence of her police escorts and election officials.’ Following the killing, violent clashes broke out, resulting in significant displacement, and the intervention of the military to quell the unrest.¹¹

Nasarawa State is also directly affected by violence in neighbouring areas: following the Yelwa crisis in Plateau State in 2004, it was estimated that several thousand refugees remained in camps in neighbouring Bauchi and Nasarawa states well into 2005, for fear of returning to their towns.¹² The diffusion of violence from neighbouring states has also included violent conflict involving armed raiders from Taraba and Kogi states.¹³

Elections in 2011

Although violence did occur in Nasarawa State both in the period preceding the elections, and during the elections themselves, this violence was relatively contained, particularly compared to violence in Kaduna and Bauchi States. While physical violence may have been relatively limited, compared to the widespread violence in neighbouring states, an environment of intimidation is suggested by election-day events such as the theft of ballot boxes from polling stations in Keana LGA,¹⁴ and the departure of 37 youth corps members who abandoned their positions as INEC staff in the state.¹⁵ In addition, while it did not escalate into actual violence, members of the Nigeria military drafted in to provide additional security during the elections in Nasarawa State detained a man for allegedly threatening to bomb the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) collection located at Nasarawa State University.¹⁶

What violence did occur in Nasarawa State in the run-up to and surrounding the April 2011 elections largely centred around two factors:

- a) Intra-party violence, concerning the PDP party primaries in the state, and
- b) The escalation of demonstrations and protests into riots, particularly in the wake of security forces’ arrest or perceived harassment of political candidates.

While most of the violent events reported appear to have spontaneously escalated in response to political developments, a small number concern apparently organized, pre-mediated and targeted attempts to disrupt the elections and political processes through attempted assassinations and coordination of violence. A significant feature of violence in Nasarawa appears to be its linkages to violence elsewhere in the country: spillover and diffusion effects, such as in mounting tensions in the wake of the Jos crisis in Plateau State, and the movement of armed militants from one state to another, both feature in reported events surrounding the elections.

¹¹ Human Rights Watch, *Nigeria’s 2003 Elections: The Unacknowledged Violence*, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/nigeria0604/nigeria0604.pdf>, p. 38.

¹² International Crisis Group, *Lessons From Nigeria’s 2011 Elections*, Africa Briefing No. 81, 2011, p. 38.

¹³ Source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset (ACLED), www.acleddata.com.

¹⁴ *Vanguard*, ‘15 Nabbed for Electoral Offences in Oyo, Nasarawa States,’ 10 April 2011.

¹⁵ *Leadership*, ‘Bombs, Guns, Blood, Gore...’ 10 April 2011.

¹⁶ *Leadership*, ‘Army Arrest Man for Bomb Threats,’ 12 April 2011.



Violence surrounding elections explicitly involving electoral institutions or workers:

- 3-6 January 2011, preparations for the PDP party primaries were accompanied by unrest in Lafia, as aggrieved party supporters protested against party leadership,¹⁷ while others threw stones at the Information Minister in Nasarawa-Eggon.¹⁸
- 4 February 2011, reports indicate that police foiled an attempted assassination attempt by Nasarawa politicians on the PDP Director of Organisation and Mobilization, driven by a dispute over the party's finalized list of candidates.¹⁹
- 7 February 2011, an angry crowd in Lafia barricaded the convoy of President Goodluck Jonathan and threw rocks at some vehicles in his motorcade as he embarked on his campaign of re-election in the North.²⁰
- 8-10 February 2011, violent demonstrations broke out in Lafia over the arrest of the CPC's gubernatorial candidate. On the third day of protesting, police fired on demonstrators wounding several and reportedly killing two youths who were not taking part in the demonstrations.²¹
- 6 April 2011, police detained a member of the House of Representatives in Nasarawa for allegedly transporting Boko Haram members from Maiduguri to Nasarawa-North to perpetrate electoral violence.²²
- 11 April 2011, youths angered by the outcome of polling results in Karmo, Toto LGA, in Nasarawa State, held the local government electoral officer captive for over five hours at the local government headquarters. Her release was ultimately secured by the military.²³
- 13 May 2011, the ACN gubernatorial candidate for Benue in the recently concluded elections was killed by unidentified gunmen near Kadarko, in Nasarawa State, 25 minutes from Makurdi.²⁴

Violence less directly related to electoral institutions:

- 16 February 2011, protests by youths angered by recent deaths on the road between Abuja and Nasarawa turned violent in the village of Shabu, when the demonstrators took two journalists and two police escorts' hostage.²⁵
- 4 April 2011, unknown assailants attacked a *Daily Trust* journalist at his home in Lafia. The attack was believed to be politically motivated, as it took place after the journalist published an article critical of politicians.²⁶

There are both direct and indirect links between these other forms of violent conflict and the risk of unrest during electoral periods. Overlapping social divisions such as religion, ethnicity and livelihoods are often mirrored in political divisions, such as to make the underlying driver or mobilizing basis of violence difficult to determine.

There are no detailed reports on an increase or change in patterns of gender and sexual-based violence or harassment in Nasarawa surrounding the elections.

¹⁷ *Daily Independent*, 'Again, Chaos, Confusion Mar PDP Primaries in States,' 3 January 2011.

¹⁸ *Daily Trust*, 'Nasarawa PDP Urges Action over Attack on Maku,' 6 January 2011.

¹⁹ *Leadership*, 'Candidates List – Police Foil Attempt to Kill PDP Official,' 4 February 2011.

²⁰ *Daily Trust*, 'Anti-Jonathan Protests in Lafia – Police Arrest CPC's Al-Makura,' 9 February 2011.

²¹ Source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Dataset (ACLED), www.acleddata.com.

²² *Daily Trust*, 'Police Accuse LP Candidate of Importing Boko Haram,' 6 April 2011.

²³ *Leadership*, 'Army Arrest Man for Bomb Threats,' 12 April 2011.

²⁴ *Sahara Reporters*, 'Benue ACN Chieftain Assassinated,' 13 May 2011.

²⁵ *Vanguard*, 'Two Vanguard Journalists, Two Policemen Escape Death in Nasarawa,' 17 February 2011.

²⁶ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labour, *2011 Human Rights Reports: Nigeria*, 24 May 2012, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/186441.pdf>, p. 25.



Response to Violence:

Civil Society:

Candidates of various political parties, at the coordination of the State Security Services (SSS) in Nasarawa, met in February 2011 to assert their commitment to peaceful polls in April of that year. According to the SSS state director, candidates 'deliberated extensively on recent political developments in the state and how [they can] conduct peaceful political activities at the coming general elections and beyond.'²⁷

Security Forces:

The Nasarawa State police commissioner reported in January 2011, that police were ordered to employ restraint in making arrests where electoral and political violence occurred within a political party. The *Daily Trust* reported the commissioner as defending the lack of arrests following widespread violence during the PDP primaries in the state, 'we were told not to do so when it is an internal affair.'²⁸

Elsewhere, security forces were criticized for their heavy-handed approach to crowd control, particularly in relation to anti-government demonstrations in February 2011, when two youths were killed. The parents of the children killed told Amnesty International, 'the soldiers were shooting at random. [Since the shooting] we have heard nothing [from the army or the government]. No visit. No one came.'²⁹

Developments Between 2011-2014

- Rise of Ombatse, ethnic Eggon militia (sometimes called a "cult" due to forced conversions through non-Christian/non-Muslim rituals) – 2013
- Impeachment process began – July/Aug 2014, with State Assembly members pushing to oust Governor Tanko Al-Makura (Ta 'Al); this movement has caused massive tension and resulted in the deaths of up to a dozen rioters in August
- Conflict in Benue caused more pastoralists to come to Nasarawa, related to political conflicts – pastoralists may stay in Nasarawa for elections (unclear if/where they vote)

²⁷ Quoted in *Daily Trust*, 'SSS, Nasarawa Candidates Parley for Peaceful Polls,' 21 February 2011.

²⁸ Quoted in *Daily Trust*, 'Nasarawa Police Restrained from Acting in Intra-Party Violence,' 19 January 2011.

²⁹ Amnesty International, *Loss of Life, Insecurity and Impunity in the Run-Up to Nigeria's Elections*, 2011, p. 7.



Major Political Players in Nasarawa State

Name	Position	Elected / Appointed	Party	Additional Information
Umaru Tanko AI-Makura	State Governor	2011	APC	AI-Makura will run for a second term as Governor of Nasarawa in 2015.
Damishi Barau	Deputy Governor	2011	PDP	Barau defected from the APC in early 2014 to join the PDP
Suleiman Asonya Adokwe	Senator	2007	PDP	-
Abdulahi Adamu	Senator	2011	APC	-
Solomon Sunday Akuku Ewuga	Senator	2011	APC	-

Elections in 2015

- Current key actors: APC – Ta’Al, Adamu (Senator), David Ombrugon (APC)
 - Ta’Al was elected 2011 as CPC, now APC – is ethnic Gwandara and Muslim
 - Deputy Governor is PDP
- PDP – Solomon Ewuga, contesting for governor, Labaran Maku, Minister of Information, contesting for governor; both under PDP, both ethnic Eggons and splitting the powerful Eggon vote; also Agabi, contesting for governor, ethnic Alago
 - PDP at national level is supporting/resourcing Maku, while Ewuga has strong following locally
- Since creation of state, there has always been a Muslim governor

Potential Drivers of Violence:

- Lack of fairness – stealing of vote, disenfranchisement
- Tribal/ethnic division
- Polling unit – will not bring materials – will announce different result from what is on the ground, rigged.
- Godfathers, actuality or perception of PDP taking vote “by force,” etc.

Potential Types of Violence:

Pre-Election:

- Disruption of registration efforts
- Hijacking of materials
- Disruption/clashes at campaign rallies
- Political Thuggery
- Bombings, sectarian violence
- Intimidation
- Hate Speech



During Election:

- Ballot box snatching
- Voter intimidation
- Killings

Post-Election:

- Protest
- Political violence degenerating into sectarian violence
- Hate Speeches

Potential Mitigating Factors

- Awareness to youth, creating workshops with both genders, informing of risks to getting involved in violence and risk of manipulation
- Traditional, religious, youth leaders can spread messages of peaceful coexistence and tolerance, as well as concession
- Dialogue at LG level

Possible Scenarios:

Scenario 1

Before Elections

- Intra-party struggle for PDP nomination
- Maku and Ewuga (Ombatse-supported) and Doma, though most popular contenders, lose primary
- Agabi gets PDP nomination, Eggon supporters and Alago supporters rally behind PDP ticket
- Inter-communal violence across ethnic divisions continues at low rate
- Jonathan announced presidential winner, clashes in Lafia, Akwanga, Keffi
- Some traditional leaders call for peace, concession by losing parties, community-level leaders calling for peace but no concerted state-wide effort

During Elections

- Sporadic intimidation at local polls, ballot-stuffing, parties engage in resource-intensive campaign (ballot stealing)
- Low voter turn-out; some materials delayed at certain polls
- Widespread clashes between Christian and Muslim groups, Ombatse activities rise
- Large military presence in Lafia town, keeps violence under control
- Violence breaks out in villages surrounding Lafia and in Doma, Obi, and Keana
- Widespread displacement by both groups depending on LGA
- Ta'Al declared victor



- Local religious leaders call for peace, and some political candidates call for peace while others make inflammatory statements

After Elections

- Residual clashes between APC/PDP after announcement
- Mass arrest of suspected Ombatse members
- Heavy military in rural areas eventually quells violence
- Widespread displacement persists for many months, with communities fleeing to Benue, Taraba, and Plateau
- Reconciliation process commences involving Eggon, Alago, Gwandara, and Fulani groups; helps calm tensions
- Sustained uptick in inter-communal violence for six months following election, but eventually dies down

Scenario 2

Before Elections

- Intra-party struggle for PDP nomination
- Agabi gets PDP nomination, Eggon supporters and Alago supporters rally behind PDP ticket
- Ewuga defects to APC, brings other political operatives, clashes between Ewuga and Ta'al supporters
- Impeachment proceedings re-visited, Ewuga supporters more vehement, heavy violence in Lafia
- Heavy inter-communal violence across ethnic divisions continues
- Jonathan announced winner, clashes in Lafia, Akwanga, Keffi
- Clashes so extensive that governor election postponed
- Tensions rise in continued build-up to governor election, delay in announcing date for governor election
- Some traditional leaders call for peace, concession by losing parties, community-level leaders calling for peace but no concerted state-wide effort

During Elections

- Some LGAs, such as Obi, do not hold elections at all
- Widespread intimidation at local polls, ballot-stuffing, parties engage in resource-intensive campaign (ballot stealing)
- Widespread clashes between Christian and Muslim groups, Ombatse activities rise
- Some military presence in Lafia, but unable to stop massive looting and rioting
- Violence breaks out in villages surrounding Lafia and in Doma, Obi, and Keana
- Mass displacement by both groups depending on LGA
- Agabi declared victor, sparks more clashes between APC supporters and PDP supporters
- APC supporters challenge the vote and engage in court as well as street battle

After Elections

- Clashes between APC/PDP and across ethnic and religious lines continue after announcement

NASARAWA STATE
ELECTION VIOLENCE SCENARIO



- State of emergency declared and 24-hour curfew imposed
- Heavy military in rural areas eventually quells violence
- Widespread displacement persists for many months, with communities fleeing to Benue, Taraba, and Plateau
- Sustained uptick in inter-communal violence for six months following election, but eventually dies down
- Reconciliation process commences involving Eggon, Alago, Gwandara, and Fulani groups; helps calm tensions; special committee appointed by Federal government to investigate violence
- New international funding begins to try to reduce violence and promote reconciliation