



## PRESS STATEMENT

### **CSOs, SOAI CONDEMNS NIGERIAN SENATE'S REJECTION OF KEY ELECTORAL REFORMS AS A GRAVE ASSAULT ON DEMOCRACY. DESCRIBE ACTION AS A LEGISLATURE AT WAR WITH DEMOCRACY.**

*... calls on citizens to firmly resist such undemocratic move.*

**Abuja, Nigeria** - Speak Out Africa Initiative (SOAI), a pan-African pro-democracy and civic accountability organization, strongly condemns the recent actions of the Nigerian Senate rejecting critical provisions of the Electoral Act Amendment Bill 2026, most notably the **mandatory electronic transmission of election results directly from polling units and the admissibility of such electronically transmitted results in courts of law, blocked the download of electronic voter cards from INEC website, reduce notice of election from 360 days to 180 days, as well as cuts down timeline for publishing list of candidates from 150 days to 60 days.**

The decision of the Senate, taken on Wednesday, February 4, 2026, represents a **deliberate rollback of hard-won democratic safeguards** and a calculated attempt to weaken the transparency, credibility, and integrity of Nigeria's electoral process ahead of the 2027 General Elections. This action stands in **direct opposition to the will of the Nigerian people**, the recommendations of civil society, and the progressive position adopted by the House of Representatives.

Let it be stated clearly: **this is not electoral reform; it is electoral sabotage.**

#### **A BETRAYAL OF PUBLIC TRUST**

By rejecting mandatory electronic transmission of results from polling units to INEC's Results Viewing Portal (IREV), the Senate has chosen secrecy over transparency and manipulation over accountability. Electronic transmission is globally recognized as a critical safeguard against result tampering during collation—the most vulnerable stage of elections in Nigeria's history.

Equally troubling is the Senate's decision to **block electronically generated voter accreditation options**, insisting solely on the Permanent Voter Card (PVC) despite well-documented challenges of PVC distribution nationwide. This contradiction, especially in the face of BVAS deployment, will only disenfranchise millions of eligible voters and further erode confidence in the system.

## COMPRESSED TIMELINES, COMPOUNDED CHAOS

SOAI expresses grave concern over the Senate's reckless compression of electoral timelines, including:

- Reducing the notice of election from **360 days to 180 days**
- Slashing the period for publication of candidates' lists from **150 days to 60 days**

These changes, widely criticized by election observers and governance experts and reported across national media platforms, will overstretch INEC's logistical capacity, increase the likelihood of errors, fuel pre- and post-election litigation, and ultimately undermine the credibility of elections.

## WEAKENING ACCOUNTABILITY, EMBOLDENING IMPUNITY

The Senate's removal of provisions designed to simplify the legal burden of proving electoral non-compliance in court is a **dangerous signal to electoral offenders**. Dismissing accountability mechanisms as a "waste of time" reveals a disturbing contempt for justice and the rule of law.

Furthermore, the refusal to impose stiffer penalties for the buying and selling of PVCs—retaining weak sanctions that fail to deter electoral crimes, a lack of seriousness in tackling the monetization and criminalization of the Nigerian vote.

## A LEGISLATURE AT WAR WITH DEMOCRACY

The stark contrast between the Senate's regressive stance and the more progressive, people-centered provisions passed by the House of Representatives exposes a deep fracture within the National Assembly. One chamber appears committed to strengthening democracy; the other seems determined to dismantle.

History has taught us a painful lesson: **it is not those who cast the votes that decide elections, but those who count them**. Nigerians have paid too high a price to return to an era of opaque collation and manufactured outcomes.

## OUR DEMAND AND CALL TO ACTION

Speak Out Africa Initiative (SOAI) therefore demands the following:

1. **Immediate rescission** of the Senate's rejection of mandatory electronic transmission of results from polling units and the recognition of electronically transmitted results as admissible evidence in court.
2. **Full harmonization of the Electoral Act Amendment Bill with the progressive provisions passed by the House of Representatives**, without dilution or compromise.
3. Restoration of realistic election timelines that support effective planning, inclusivity, and transparency.
4. Stronger penalties and enforcement mechanisms for electoral offences.

We call on **Nigerians at home and in the diaspora, civil society organizations, professional bodies, faith-based institutions, the media, and the international community** to remain vigilant and to **peacefully but firmly resist** this attempt by a few self-serving individuals to mortgage the future of our democracy.

Nigerians will not be cowed. We will accept **nothing short of an unadulterated Electoral Act** that guarantees transparency, accountability, and the sanctity of the vote.

The credibility of the 2027 elections—and the legitimacy of those who emerge from them—depends on it. **Democracy is non-negotiable. Our votes must count !**

Signed,

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Abuja, Nigeria.

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#NigeriaDecides2027

#ElectronicTransmissionOfResultsIsWhatWeWant

#CredibleElectionIsNon-negotiable

#NoToSystemicRigging