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PRESS STATEMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CSO, SOAI DEMANDS INDEPENDENT AUDIT OF INEC VOTERS REGISTER, WARNS AGAINST DISENFRANCHISEMENT AHEAD OF 2027 ELECTIONS.

...says the Commission cannot be the sole institution validating the credibility of its own clean-up exercise.

Abuja, Nigeria | 11 November 2026.

Speak Out Africa Initiative (SOAI) commends the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for acknowledging significant irregularities in the Preliminary Register of Voters and undertaking a clean-up exercise that, according to the Commission, resulted in the removal of 1,608,660 confirmed invalid registrations and 873 records of verified deceased voters. We also acknowledge INEC's disclosure that 54 personnel across 10 states have been identified for further investigation over alleged involvement in registration irregularities.

These disclosures are important steps towards accountability. However, the scale of the irregularities, the concerns surrounding the display and online publication of the register, and the possibility of eligible voters being wrongly excluded make an **independent, transparent and technically credible audit of the voters register an urgent necessity before the Final Register is published on 15 December 2026.**

INEC cannot be the sole institution responsible for identifying irregularities, determining which records should be removed and assuring Nigerians that its own corrective exercise has resolved the problems. Independent verification is necessary to establish whether the clean-up has been accurate, comprehensive and fair, and whether the final register can withstand public scrutiny.

THE CRISIS REQUIRES MORE THAN INEC'S ASSURANCE

The controversy surrounding the 2025/2026 Continuous Voter Registration exercise has raised serious questions about the integrity of the national register. Public concerns over apparently artificial or AI-generated photographs, duplicate records, unusual registration patterns, questionable entries and deceased persons remaining on the register have placed the Commission under intense scrutiny. INEC Chairman, Professor Joas Amupitan, SAN, has himself acknowledged the historical integrity challenges facing the register, including records dating from 2011 to 2023.

SOAI recognises that automated biometric screening does not automatically establish that a record is fraudulent. INEC has rightly explained that records flagged by its Automated Biometric Identification System (ABIS) require further examination before a determination can be made. Nevertheless, the public must be able to independently verify that these safeguards have been applied consistently and that no eligible Nigerian has been deprived of the right to vote through an erroneous deletion.

The removal of more than 1.6 million records is a significant intervention. It is also a compelling reason to ensure that the outcome is independently validated. Nigerians should not be expected to accept the final register solely on the strength of the Commission's assurances, particularly when the scale and origins of the irregularities have generated legitimate public concern.

QUESTIONS OVER STATUTORY COMPLIANCE MUST BE ANSWERED

The controversy has been compounded by concerns over the timing and accessibility of the preliminary register. Section 19(1) of the Electoral Act, 2026, requires INEC to arrange for the register to be displayed and published online for public scrutiny not later than 90 days before a general election. Section 19(2) provides for the consideration of claims and objections within 14 days after display or publication in accordance with the section. Section 19(3) further provides for objections and claims relating to ineligible or deceased persons and the omission of eligible voters.

Although the physical display reportedly took place between 9 and 15 October 2026, the online publication followed on 26 October, after concerns from stakeholders over access to the register. The delayed online access significantly constrained the opportunity for citizens, political parties and civil society organisations to scrutinise the records. **Reports that a specific complaint mechanism was not made available until after the online publication have raised further concerns about whether the full statutory opportunity for claims and objections was preserved.**

SOAI therefore calls on INEC to publish and explain how it calculated and applied the statutory 14-day period counting from **28 October** which was the date the complaint mechanism was later included for voters to access, and where questions of statutory compliance arise, they should be addressed through transparent disclosure. Compliance must be demonstrated, not merely asserted.

INDEPENDENT AUDIT IS ESSENTIAL TO RESTORING PUBLIC TRUST

SOAI notes that calls for an independent audit have emerged amid widespread concerns from stakeholders and political actors about the credibility of the register. Such a demand should not be treated as an attack on INEC or an attempt to undermine the electoral process. It is a reasonable accountability measure designed to strengthen the Commission's work and reassure citizens that the final register is reliable.

The audit should be undertaken by a genuinely independent, multidisciplinary team comprising credible technical experts, election administration specialists, civil society representatives and other qualified stakeholders, under transparent terms of reference. Its independence must be protected from political interference and conflicts of interest.

The audit should, at a minimum:

1. **Independently verify the methodology, evidence and results supporting the removal of the 1,608,660 registrations and 873 deceased-voter records, without compromising legitimate personal data.**
2. **Examine the risk of wrongful deletion, duplicate records, manipulated photographs, identity mismatches and other irregularities in both the 2025/2026 registrations and relevant historical records from 2011–2023.**

3. **Review the integrity of the ABIS screening and adjudication processes, including the safeguards used to distinguish invalid registrations from legitimate voters whose biometric or demographic records may be inconsistent.**
4. **Review the integrity of the ABIS screening and adjudication processes, including the safeguards used to distinguish invalid registrations from legitimate voters whose biometric or demographic records may be inconsistent.**

5. **Assess compliance with statutory requirements governing public display, online publication, claims and objections, and the correction of the register.**
6. **Verify that records retained in the final register are supported by appropriate evidence and that eligible voters whose records were wrongly flagged or removed have accessible remedies.**
7. **Publish a timely, independently verified report of findings, methodology, limitations and recommendations before the final register is certified, while protecting sensitive personal information and ongoing investigations.**

INEC should provide the audit team with appropriate access to anonymised data, relevant system logs, adjudication records and documentation necessary for verification, subject to lawful safeguards. The audit must not become a reason to delay corrective action or obstruct legitimate election preparations.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE 54 OFFICIALS IDENTIFIED

SOAI is deeply concerned by INEC's disclosure that 54 personnel across 10 states have been identified as allegedly complicit in registration irregularities. This disclosure raises questions about internal controls, supervision, responsibility and the possibility that established procedures were deliberately circumvented.

We call on INEC to **disclose the identities and official designations of personnel against whom formal findings have been made**, subject to applicable law and due process, and to publish the states and nature of the alleged infractions. Where investigations remain ongoing, the Commission should provide clear information on their status and timetable without prematurely declaring anyone guilty.

Any official against whom credible evidence establishes misconduct must face appropriate disciplinary action and, where the evidence warrants it, prosecution. INEC should also explain the safeguards that will prevent personnel implicated in these irregularities from compromising the 2027 electoral process. Accountability must extend beyond identifying individual staff to examining supervisory failures, system weaknesses and institutional responsibility.

We further urge INEC to **publish its applicable artificial intelligence and digital-governance framework,** including the safeguards governing automated screening, biometric matching, human review, data protection and correction of erroneous records. Nigerians deserve to understand how these technologies are used in decisions that can affect their fundamental political rights.

NO EXCUSE FOR DISENFRANCHISEMENT

SOAI acknowledges INEC's decision to defer the proposed nationwide voter revalidation exercise in response to concerns about its proximity to the elections and its potential effect on eligible voters. We also welcome the Commission's commitment to continue using established verification mechanisms.

However, the credibility of these measures will depend on their fairness, transparency and effectiveness. No eligible Nigerian should lose the right to vote because of an administrative error, an inaccurate biometric match, an unresolved historical record or a failure to provide a meaningful opportunity to challenge an incorrect decision.

With the final register scheduled for publication on 15 December 2026, the remaining time must be used to undertake independent verification, reconcile the records, resolve outstanding complaints and correct any wrongful exclusions. INEC should publish clear instructions for voters to check their registration status, report omissions and obtain timely remedies before the final register is certified.

OUR CALL TO INEC

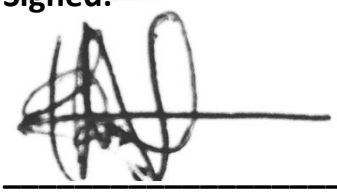
SOAI urges Prof. Joash Amupitan and the Commission to treat an independent audit not as a concession to political pressure but as a necessary investment in electoral credibility. INEC must not repeat the mistakes of the past by disregarding legitimate public concerns that could strengthen the electoral process.

The Commission's constitutional responsibility is not merely to organise elections, but to administer them in a manner that earns public confidence. Where serious irregularities have been acknowledged, transparency must go beyond announcements of records removed; it must include independent verification of the methods, results and safeguards used.

The credibility of the 2027 general elections will depend significantly on whether Nigerians believe that the voters register reflects eligible voters accurately, excludes invalid entries fairly and provides equal protection against both electoral fraud and wrongful disenfranchisement.

Our message is clear: **we commend the clean-up, verify it independently, hold those responsible accountable and protect every eligible voter. An independently audited voters register is not a threat to INEC; it is an opportunity for the Commission to rebuild public trust before Nigerians go to the polls in 2027.**

Signed:



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