

□ Election Violence in Nigeria not Inevitable

When **Nigeria** went to the polls in 2011, a period of intense post-election [violence](#) left over 800 dead and thousands more displaced. Given that past incidents of violence are seen as an indicator of the potential for future bloodshed, many fear that a similar outcome will come to pass when the now postponed elections are held on

March 28

th

2015

. In addition, concerns over technical deficiencies, intense political rivalries exacerbated by ethnic and religious cleavages, and the menacing

Boko Haram

threat, are

[said](#)

to be creating a ‘perfect storm’ that could see the country erupt into another round of fighting.

The recent announcement of the delay has compounded the situation further, with opposition candidates

[viewing](#)

it as an attempt to

“...subvert Nigeria’s democratic process”.

In this climate, the risk of atrocity crimes is immense. Civilians could find themselves threatened by Boko Haram’s attempts to disrupt the electoral process, heavy-handed retaliation from the Nigerian military, inter-communal or religious post-election violence, or some deadly combination of all of these.

However, despite the presence of these risk factors, electoral violence is not inevitable. As

Ban Ki-moon

noted in his 2013 thematic

[report](#)

‘**Responsibility to Protect: State Responsibility and Prevention**’

, the absence of atrocities in countries that display one or more risk factors stems, at least in part, from sources of national resilience. For example, the 2013 election in

Kenya

demonstrates how a country that has previously experienced atrocity crimes at the polls can learn from this and take preventive measures to avoid repeating the cycle of violence.

There are encouraging signs that Nigerians, regional players, and the international community are learning the lessons of Nigeria’s 2011 election by taking steps to mitigate the risk of atrocities and prevent the recurrence of electoral violence. The below sections detail the unique threats faced by Nigeria, the relationship between elections and mass atrocities, and civil society recommendations for further preventive action that can be taken with the hopes of sparing the country more carnage.

(...)

Read the full blog [here](#) .