

A LECTURE DELIVERED AT THE SECURITY SUMMIT ORGANIZED BY THE KEBBI STATE ELDERS FORUM IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 34TH ANNIVERSARY OF KEBBI STATE, HELD AT THE BANQUET HALL, PRESIDENTIAL LODGE, BIRNIN KEBBI. 27th August 2025

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Protocols

His Excellency, the Governor of Kebbi State, His Excellency Comrade Dr. Nasir Idris, Kauran Gwandu...

The Deputy Governor Sen. Umar Abubakar Tafida

The Speaker, Kebbi State House of Assembly Rt. Hon. Usman Muhammed Ankwai

Members of the State Executive Council

Honorable members of the Kebbi State House of Assembly

Hon. Chairmen of Local Government Councils

The Chairman, Kebbi State Elders Forum Gen. Muhammad Magoro rtd. Galadiman Zuru

Our Royal Fathers, the Emirs of Gwandu, Argungu, Yauri, and Zuru...

Religious Leaders, Community Leaders

Gentlemen of the Press

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I wish to begin by acknowledging and appreciating the **Kebbi Elders Forum** for their courage and proactiveness in putting up this crucial engagement. This initiative demonstrates a deep understanding of the issues at hand and a firm commitment to alerting all stakeholders. I must also specially acknowledge and appreciate the State Executive Governor, **Comrade Dr. Nasir Idris**, for his unwavering alignment with the Elders Forum in this regard. This event is a vital step toward ensuring a coordinated effort to curb the menace of political thuggery and maintain peace and security in our state.

Given that this event is deliberately scheduled to coincide with the **34th anniversary of our beloved state**, I extend my heartfelt **congratulations to all the good people of Kebbi State** on this joyous occasion.

1. Introduction: A Threat to Our Collective Aspiration

I am honored to stand before you today to discuss a topic that is not just timely, but of critical importance to the sustenance of our nascent democracy and the stability of our beloved state. The subject is **"Curbing the Menace: Political Thuggery and Its Negative Impact on Peace and Security in Kebbi State."**

As the National Orientation Agency, our mandate is to communicate government policies, promote patriotism, and serve as a feedback channel on the pulse of the Nigerian society. Today, that pulse, particularly during electioneering and political activities, is often troubled by the recurring spectacle of political thuggery. This menace, fueled by desperation and a lust for power at all costs, poses a significant threat to our collective aspirations for a peaceful, secure, and prosperous Kebbi State. The truth is that in Kebbi, we are lucky that political thuggery is often not violent, but if unchecked and the potential recipes taken for granted, it can degenerate into violence.

2. Defining Political Thuggery

Political thuggery, at its core, is the deliberate use of violence, intimidation, and coercion by individuals or groups, often sponsored by politicians, to achieve political ends. It's an anti-democratic act that seeks to undermine the will of the people and disrupt the peaceful conduct of political processes. These "political thugs," or "Yan Banga" as they're commonly known in our local parlance, are often unemployed or underemployed youths who are exploited and armed to create chaos.

3. The Negative Impacts of Political Thuggery on Kebbi State

The negative consequences of political thuggery are far-reaching and touch every facet of our society. It's a cancer that erodes the very foundations of our peace and security in several ways:

- 1. Disruption of the Electoral Process and Democratic Values:** Political thuggery is fundamentally antithetical to democracy. It disrupts rallies, destroys campaign materials, and intimidates voters and opposition figures, creating an atmosphere of fear and disenfranchisement.
- 2. Loss of Lives and Property:** The most tragic consequence is the loss of human lives and the destruction of valuable property. Clashes between rival factions often lead to serious injuries, fatalities, and the destruction of homes, businesses, and public infrastructure.
- 3. Breakdown of Law and Order:** When perpetrators of political violence aren't held accountable, it erodes public trust in our security agencies and judicial system, creating a fertile ground for general criminality.
- 4. Economic Instability:** Violence negatively impacts economic activities. Businesses may close, investors may be discouraged, and the overall economic growth of the state is hampered.

5. Social Fragmentation: Political thuggery pits communities, families, and friends against each other. It exploits existing tensions and creates new ones, leading to deep social divisions and a loss of community trust.

4. The New Frontier of Thuggery: The Dangers of Online Media

In recent times, we've witnessed a disturbing trend that's a clear recipe for physical political thuggery: the media cold war. The incessant and unnecessary online aggression among our media users, particularly on social media, is unbecoming of a state that prides itself on both Western and spiritual education. This digital thuggery creates a toxic environment, fueled by **intolerance to opposition opinion**, personal attacks, **disrespect to government and its officials**, and **the denigration of influential public figures**. This can easily spill over into real-world violence.

We must desist from this dangerous path. Our media engagement must be objective, constructive, and guided by our conscience. We must adhere to the broadcasting code of ethics, ensuring our communication is respectful and never inciteful. We must not become peddlers of hate and disenchantment, but rather, agents of dialogue and progress.

5. The Ominous Link: Causes of Youth Vulnerability and Drug Abuse

I must now draw your attention to the root causes that make our youth susceptible to this menace. The vulnerability of our young people is a complex issue driven by a combination of socioeconomic, political, and institutional factors, all of which are amplified by illicit drug use.

- **Socioeconomic Challenges:** High rates of youth unemployment, poverty, and a lack of economic opportunities can lead to feelings of hopelessness. In this state, young people are highly vulnerable to being lured by politicians who offer quick money and other benefits in exchange for their services as thugs.
 - **Lack of Education and Mentorship:** An inadequate political education and a shortage of positive role models can leave youth with a limited understanding of their civic responsibilities and the long-term consequences of their actions. This makes them easy targets for manipulation and propaganda.
 - **Drug and Substance Abuse:** The prevalence of drug abuse among youth is a significant catalyst for political thuggery. Politicians may supply drugs to increase aggression, suppress fear, and make thugs more compliant. The addiction itself creates a cycle of dependency, making the youths reliant on their political sponsors for survival.
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6. Specific Political Activities that Fuel Thuggery

Beyond the general causes, we must recognize that political thuggery is not random; it's fueled by specific, premeditated political activities that seek to bypass democratic processes. These include:

- **High-Stakes Election Campaigns and Primaries:** The intense competition for political office often leads to a "do-or-die" mentality. Thugs are used to intimidate opponents and their supporters, disrupt rallies, and snatch ballot boxes to manipulate results.
 - **Intra-Party Disputes:** Disagreements within political parties, especially during congresses or selection processes, often lead rival factions to hire thugs to settle scores and gain an advantage.
 - **Political Rallies and Public Gatherings:** While rallies are meant to be a show of support, they are often used as a platform for intimidation. Thugs are mobilized to create an intimidating presence, attack members of opposing parties (and desperate parties that seeks to dislodge ruling party), and provoke clashes.
 - **Defections and Cross-Carpeting:** When a high-profile politician defects, it can trigger a violent reaction. The new party may use thugs to protect their new member, while the old party may use thugs to intimidate the defector and their supporters.
 - **Vote Buying and Selling:** The illegal act of vote buying is often backed by political thuggery. Thugs are employed to enforce deals and intimidate voters to ensure they vote for the sponsor's candidate.
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7. The Kebbi Context: Realities and Case Studies

While the causes of political thuggery are a national issue, its expression in Kebbi State often takes on a unique and less violent character. However, this is precisely why we must be vigilant; the underlying conditions that fuel the menace are present and could easily escalate. The realities we face include:

- **Intra-Party and Intra-Community Intimidation:** Unlike states where rival gangs engage in open warfare, thuggery in Kebbi often manifests as targeted intimidation within political parties and local communities. It's less about bloodshed and more about psychological pressure, social exclusion, and the use of 'yan banga' and or 'Yan Social Media' to create a threatening show of strenght particularly on social media space to discourage dissent or opposition views and on the other hand disrepute and intimidate ruling party.
- **The Drug-Fueled Cycle of Exploitation:** A key reality is the exploitation of vulnerable, unemployed youth through the lure of quick money and illicit drugs. These youths are not necessarily armed for battle but are used as hired hands to chant slogans, heckle opponents, or cause minor disruptions. The danger lies in their dependency on these sponsors, which creates a cycle of exploitation that prevents them from seeking legitimate economic opportunities.
- **The Subdued Nature of the 2023 General Election:** The relative peace of the last general election in Kebbi was a positive sign but should not breed complacency. Isolated incidents of thuggery at rallies and polling units were more about a

show of force and strategic disruption than outright violence. The risk remains that this 'subdued' thuggery, if left unchecked, will evolve into the full-blown violence we see in other parts of the country.

8. The Way Forward: A Call to Action

To effectively combat political thuggery and its dangerous nexus with illicit drug use, we must embrace a multi-pronged approach:

- I. **Political Will and a Peace Pact for 2027:** Our political leaders must demonstrate a strong will to condemn and actively discourage the use of political thugs. This must be backed by concrete actions. I, therefore, recommend that all political parties presenting candidates for the 2027 general elections in Kebbi State must sign a **Peace Pact**. This pact should be a solemn commitment to issue-based campaigns, and a pledge to refrain from sponsoring or condoning violence, intimidation, and drug-fueled thuggery.
- II. **Sustained Youth Empowerment and Political Inclusion:** Youth should be **agents of positive change**, but the ill-informed and misguided among them are vulnerable to being **agents of destruction and negative societal change**. It is therefore our collective duty to ensure our youth are properly guided. In this regard, the efforts of His Excellency, **Dr. Nasir Idris, Kauran Gwandu**, are highly commendable. His administration's focus on youth empowerment through agriculture and strategic political appointments is a crucial step in the right direction. We must build on these efforts to ensure more of our youth are productively engaged.

A Call to Our Young Appointees: Upholding the Dignity of Service

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I must now take a moment to speak directly to our vibrant youth who have been entrusted with positions of leadership in this administration—our **Special Advisers, Senior Special Assistants, and Special Assistants**.

Your appointments are a testament to the foresight and commitment of our Governor, who clearly sees the youth as partners in progress. We deeply appreciate and commend him for this bold engagement and strongly encourage him to continue on this path.

Now, to our young appointees, I say this with sincerity and firmness: the positions you occupy are **revered and dignifying**. These are high offices of public trust. You must recognize this significance and uphold the dignity of your offices at all times. Your conduct, both in public and private life, must be consistent with the high standards and demands of your offices. Do not allow your actions to be a source of disrespect or a downgrade. Instead, see this incredible opportunity as a **springboard**—a powerful catapult to propel you into even higher, more prestigious positions in the future.

We also acknowledge the critical support and comprehensive efforts of the Federal Government. President Bola Tinubu's administration has introduced several initiatives to empower Nigerian youth with skills, knowledge, and opportunities to thrive. These notable programs include:

- **Skill-Up Artisans Programme (SUPA):** Provides training and skills development.
- **Nigerian Youth Academy (NiYA):** A national learning platform targeting 7 million youths with practical and digital skills.
- **National Youth Talent Export Programme (NATEP):** Designed to provide economic opportunities.
- **3 Million Technical Talent (3MTT):** Aims to train millions in software development, AI, and cybersecurity.
- **Youth Investment Fund and Youth Development Bank:** Financial institutions to fuel entrepreneurship and innovation.

iii. To make a truly transformative impact, I propose that the **Kebbi State government under His Excellency Dr. Nasir Idris, Kauran Gwandu**, organize an overseas master training for youth. This would involve sending skilled youth groups, such as the National Association of Automobile Technicians and Carpenters, to countries like **China for woodwork and Japan for automobile repairs and upgrading**. The program should be followed by the establishment of **state-of-the-art workshops** at each of the four emirate headquarters of **Gwandu, Argungu, Yauri, and Zuru**. This is not about rivalry but **equity and strategic considerations** to ensure widespread access and cost reduction measures for trainees. Trainees would be drawn from the LGAs within each emirate's catchment area. The goal is for the overseas trainees to return and pass on their newly acquired skills to as many youth as possible, ensuring that working tools and equipment match the new skills.

iv. Furthermore, I recommend that the government set up a dedicated **committee to review national initiatives on crop production** and align them to individual local governments in Kebbi State. By leveraging the full agricultural value chain, a vast number of youth can be engaged and earn a sustainable living. The **multi-million Naira cashew cultivation** ², in particular, is a low-hanging fruit initiative that can make Kebbi State among the net exporters of this valuable crop in just about five years. This strategic approach, combining skills training with agricultural development, has the potential to encourage the youth to participate in productive ventures and permanently shun thuggery.

v. **A Resilient and Efficient Security Architecture:** The twin evils of political thuggery and illicit drug use are a severe test of our security architecture. It is imperative that our security agencies are not only impartial, professional, and well-equipped but also proactive and data-driven. I recommend that security agencies use the available indices of prevalence of drug use, recipes for political thuggery, and youth restiveness to design targeted strategies.

vi. **Citizen Sensitization and Civic Education:** This is where the National Orientation Agency has a major role to play. We must intensify our campaigns to educate citizens, especially the youth, on the dangers of political thuggery and drug abuse. Our programs are designed to support youth in becoming responsible citizens. They include:

- i. **The National Values Charter:** This outlines core values and a "Citizen's Code" to instill discipline, tolerance, and accountability in young people from an early age.
- ii. **Youth Reorientation Programs:** These address contemporary challenges by promoting patriotism and national pride.
- iii. **Citizens Brigades:** We are establishing these in schools to familiarize children with national values, leadership principles, and civic duties from a formative stage.
- iv. **Collaboration with NYSC:** Through our partnership with the National Youth Service Corps, we turn corps members into frontline civic ambassadors who lead civic outreach in their host communities.

NOA should be supported by the state government to continue to engage with the citizens in this regards.

v. **Community Engagement:** Community engagement is crucial in combating political thuggery. While traditional leaders are expected to be neutral or stay away from partisan politics, they should wade in in the event of a clash or perceived clash to play the fatherly role of mediating. This intervention is essential to maintain peace and harmony. Their influence at the grassroots level can be a powerful tool for discouraging political thuggery and fostering a culture of tolerance and dialogue.

9. Conclusion

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, political thuggery, particularly when fueled by illicit drug use and media propaganda, is a direct threat to the peace, security, and progress of Kebbi State. It's a destructive force that must be confronted head-on by all of us. As citizens, we have a responsibility to reject violence and demand accountability from our leaders. Let us all become ambassadors of peace and security. Let us work together to build a Kebbi State where political discourse is civil, elections are peaceful, and the safety of every citizen is paramount.

Thank you, and may God bless Kebbi State and the Federal Republic of Nigeria.