

Nigeria: Ifa council suspends Isese festival in Ilorin. Islamic council ask worshippers to keep-off



From the [Punch](#) and [Vanguard](#)

[Isese Day is a regional public holiday](#) that may be observed in the Nigerian states of Ogun and Osun on August 20th each year. The day is set aside for traditional worshipers to celebrate their deities. The day is observed as the culmination of a week of traditional religious activities and festivities. Isese (the Yorùbá word for Tradition) Day celebrates the Yorùbá traditions and religion in a display of culture and spirituality with parties, festivals, parades, lectures... The Yorubas are the main ethnic group in the states of Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo, which are subdivisions of Nigeria; there are also substantial indigenous Yoruba communities in Benin, Ghana, Togo and the Caribbean.

The International Council for Ifa Religion on Tuesday announced its decision to suspend the planned Isese festival in Ilorin, the Kwara State capital.

A statement signed by the President of the Council, Oluwo Solagbade Popoola which was made available to our correspondent in Abuja noted that the decision to temporarily suspend the festival was to avoid confrontations. The council also accused the Police of being prejudiced towards the Ifa religion.

The statement reads, "Yesterday, August 14, 2023, our representatives attended a meeting with the Kwara State Police Commissioner in Ilorin after having been invited in respect of our Letter of Notification on the proposed celebration of the Isese Day slated to hold in Ilorin on the 20th August 2023. "The outcome of the meeting was the prohibition of the hosting of the festival purportedly as a result of what they called rising tension in the State. . . the ban placed on our Isese Festival has been viewed from a legal perspective as an abuse of the fundamental rights of all traditionalists in Kwara State. It has also been seen as a testimony to the fact that the police authorities were already prejudiced against our faith. The ban is the first to be imposed on any lawful religious gathering in the entire history of Kwara State to the advantage of the antagonists of such an event. . .

As an organisation that respects the sanctity of human life and holds high our belief in Olodumare as the giver of life, ICIR will never wish evil for anyone regardless of their faith or creed. We, the traditionalists, being the original owners of the land, would never allow descent into bloodletting or be provoked to dance to a drumbeat of war by any other religion. As a true religion of peace, we have never and will never engage anyone in a religious war let alone shedding human blood for the sake of religion. We are aware of the fact that their overzealousness notwithstanding, the majority of these foreign religious fanatics are fellow Yoruba people. " *It's*

worth reading all the statement of why these practitioners of the traditional religion has decided to suspend their main annual festival. Readers might also remember the [problems faced by the priestess of Osun](#) who tried to hold prayers to honour, if I remember the wider reports correctly, a river deity last month.

The council of Islamic Clerics at a briefing yesterday warned that the Ifa festival, under any guise, would not be allowed in any part of the Ilorin Emirate, comprising Asa, Moro, Ilorin East, Ilorin West, and Ilorin South Local Government Areas, LGAs. The Executive Secretary of the council, Salihu Mohammed, who is a former Grand Khadi of Kwara State Sharia Court of Appeal, spoke, on behalf of the Chairman of the Council of Ulama and Chief Imam of Ilorin, Sheik Bashir Salihu.

" . . . we have found it extremely necessary to plead with the Kwara State government and all stakeholders to appeal to the ICIR and similar interest groups to stay away from Ilorin as available evidence convinced us that the staging of the event in Ilorin would have a serious negative consequence on the peace of Kwara State. We don't think any individuals or group has anything to gain from the destruction of the harmonious coexistence. .. we are not unaware of the readiness of various youth groups never to allow the staging of the so-called 'Isese' festival anywhere in Ilorin. *How 'harmonious' is it, if all other worship and believe is suppressed by threats of violence?*

"We as leaders, see merit in the position of the Muslim youths.

The Emirate might be a Yoruba-speaking city, but it must be realized that its present culture is no longer that of Yoruba, Hausa, Fulani, Nupe or any other, but purely an Islamic culture. We, therefore, advise that they should allow peace to reign across Nigeria. (We understand the motive of their

sinister and abominable move but warn that Ilorin has moved on)