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L-R: Former Governor of Lagos State, Akinwunmi Ambode, Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu during a visit of the former governor to the Lagos House on Monday. | Photo: Facebook



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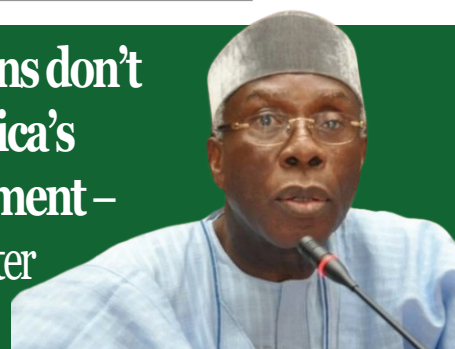
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Educationists React as NYSC Invalidates 101 Graduate Certificates

• They were fraudulently mobilised , says NYSC • It's reflection of societal rot - Ex-ASUU President • Prosecute offenders - Prof Ajao

By **Olumide Olusegun, Chibuzor Alli, and Deborah Odekola**

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) has taken a firm stand against academic fraud by invalidating the certificates of 101 graduates who were fraudulently mobilised for national youth service.

This unprecedented action was disclosed by the NYSC Director of Information and Public Relations, Mr. Eddy Megwa, in a statement issued on Monday.

The move is part of the NYSC's ongoing efforts to uphold the integrity of the national service scheme, a cornerstone of Nigeria's education system, the statement stated.

According to Mr. Megwa, the 101 individuals were illegally mobilised by the University of Calabar during the 2021, 2022, and 2023 NYSC service years.

"Out of the figure, 99 were underlisted for service, while two others were exempted from service," he explained.

The NYSC management emphasised its unwavering commitment to ensuring that only qualified Nigerian youth, whether trained locally or abroad, participate in the national service.

"We are determined to prevent unqualified individuals, especially those purportedly graduating from unaccredited universities, from being recognized by the NYSC," Megwa stated. "The NYSC Certificates of the affected persons have been invalidated forthwith."

He urged employers, government Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), corporate and religious organizations, multinational companies, and

other key stakeholders to take note of this development and act accordingly.

"The public should always verify the authenticity of NYSC certificates, exemption letters, and exclusion letters presented for any purpose directly with the NYSC National Directorate Headquarters in Abuja," Megwa advised.

The incident has sparked reactions from educationists who believe that this is just the tip of the iceberg and that more needs to be done to address the root causes of such fraudulent activities.

This development raised concerns about the integrity of Nigeria's educational system.

While the NYSC's actions are commendable, educationists argue that more needs to be done to prevent such incidents in the future.

From implementing technological systems to track student activities, to prosecuting those involved in fraudulent activities, it is clear that a multi-faceted approach is needed to restore integrity to Nigeria's education sector.

A Reflection of Societal Rot" – Prof. Abiodun Ogunyemi

Reacting to the report, an educationist and former National President of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Professor Abiodun Ogunyemi, described the situation as a reflection of the broader moral decay in Nigerian society.

"I think it's a reflection of the general rot that we see in our society. Once there is a decay in morality, you cannot expect institutions to be free from bias," he remarked.

Professor Ogunyemi expressed concern that this

decay is now evident even in institutions that should ideally uphold the highest standards of integrity, like universities.

"We expected the highest standards to come out of the universities. But if the rot of the society is now being reflected in terms of moral decadence in the universities, then we have to look into our leadership recruitment as well as the quality of training," he added.

He called for the implementation of effective technological systems in universities to track student activities from admission through to certification and NYSC mobilisation.

"Some institutions that have effectively deployed technology can track their students' activities right from the time of admission, through their examinations up to their certification and also mobilization for NYSC," he noted.

However, he warned that technology alone is not enough. "Even technology will be powered by human beings. We need to ensure that the system is purged of

perpetrators of evil who have given the system a bad name."

Professor Ogunyemi urged for increased vigilance within the university system to prevent it from becoming a hub for illicit activities.

He stressed the need for internal vigilance to ensure that universities do not become breeding grounds for crimes such as impersonation, record manipulation, and fraudulent mobilization for NYSC.

"All educationists and educators, and those who administer universities and other tertiary institutions, have a lot of work to do because the decadence has set in some places.

"We don't expect such dastardly acts that further corrupt the society to be going on in the university system," he said.

Prosecute Offenders – Prof. Moyosore Ajao

Similarly, Professor Moyosore Ajao, an educationist and Chairman of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), University of Ilorin Chapter, called for a thorough

investigation and prosecution of those responsible for the fraudulent mobilisation.

He pointed out the need for concrete evidence to support the NYSC's claims.

"When such things happen, there are questions to ask.

"Firstly, what evidence does NYSC have that a particular university or institution mobilised the students fraudulently?" he questioned.

Professor Ajao stressed that universities found culpable should face disciplinary measures.

"We must be able to identify those universities and question what disciplinary measures NYSC has taken against such institutions. Because if University A has been found culpable, they need to be investigated," he stated.

He also emphasised the need for preventive measures to stop such frauds from reoccurring.

He argued that without proper investigation and accountability, illegal activities will continue. "Once you don't do that, then you are encouraging people to

continue to engage in illegality and acts of criminality.

"Thirdly, what safety measures has NYSC put in place to ensure that such doesn't reoccur? Because if you have identified something was done and it is wrong, there is a need for you to put up some safety measures, some form of screening to ensure this doesn't happen again," he advised.

Professor Ajao further called for the prosecution of the graduates involved in the fraudulent mobilization.

"What did you do to those students, to those graduates that were illegally mobilised? Because if they have been arrested, prosecuted, and properly verified, some facts may emerge," he noted.

He speculated that a larger syndicate, possibly involving NYSC staff, might be behind the fraudulent activities. "It might be that some syndicates are involved. It might be even some members and some staff of NYSC, you never can tell. Some organizations might be responsible," he said.

Ex-BoI MD replaces Iliyomade at RCCG City of David

By **Lillian Edward**

Former Managing Director of the Bank of Industry (BoI), Pastor Kayode Pitan, has been appointed as the new pastor of the City of David Parish in Lagos, under the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG). He will succeed Pastor Charles Kpandei, who has been serving as the interim pastor following the suspension of Pastor Idowu Iliyomade.

The news of Pitan's appointment was confirmed by Church Times Nigeria on Sunday. According to the report, Pitan's new role comes after Iliyomade

was suspended due to undisclosed allegations. Although some media outlets previously reported that Pitan had already assumed his duties, it was actually Kpandei who had been leading the parish since June, shortly after Iliyomade's suspension.

A reliable source within the RCCG informed Church Times that Pitan has now been formally designated as the incumbent pastor of the City of David Parish. The decision was reportedly made by the church's governing council during the recently concluded RCCG convention.

Before his appointment

to the City of David Parish, Pastor Pitan served as the Pastor in Charge of the Tabernacle of David in Region 51 and held the position of Regional Pastor. His extensive experience in the corporate world is expected to play a crucial role in the management of the ongoing Trinity Tower project and in providing overall leadership at the City of David Parish.

With this new role, Pastor Pitan will oversee Region 20, with the City of David serving as its headquarters. Pastor Ben Akabueze will assist him as the Assistant

Pastor in Charge of Region 20. Meanwhile, Pastor Kpandei, who temporarily led the City of David Parish, has returned to his previous position as Pastor in Charge of Region 11 in Lekki.

Pitan's appointment marks the official end of Pastor Idowu Iliyomade's tenure at the City of David Parish. His leadership journey is notable for its combination of spiritual dedication and corporate acumen. After completing his graduate studies in the United States, Pitan returned to Nigeria 37 years ago and made significant strides in the banking and finance sectors.

Before his entry into the ministry, he worked at Citi Bank and later founded his own finance house. However, the venture collapsed in 1993, resulting in a \$3 million loss, an event that led him to deepen his Christian faith. Pitan went on to serve as the Managing Director and CEO of the Bank of Industry (BoI) from July 2015, where he focused on industrialization and SME support. His leadership was marked by strategic impact, and he was reappointed for a second term in 2022. He eventually resigned in 2023 amid a government reshuffle under President Bola Tinubu.

Pastor Kayode Pitan's new role at the City of David Parish is anticipated to bring both spiritual and administrative growth to the church, building on his vast experience and dedication to his faith.

Equity Market Reverses Gains, Investors Lose N404bn

By **Chucks Peter**

The Nigerian stock market reversed its previous session's gains on Monday, resulting in a loss of N404 billion, or 0.72%, for equity investors.

The market's decline was mainly driven by losses in major stocks, including BUA Cement and top-tier banks like Zenith Bank and Guaranty Trust Holding Company (GTCO).

Specifically, the market capitalization of the Nigerian Exchange Ltd. (NGX) closed at N55,574 trillion, down from its opening value of N55,978 trillion.

The All-Share Index also dropped by 0.72%, losing 711.2 points to close at 97,880.94, compared to 98,592.12 recorded on Friday.

This decline brought the Year-To-Date (YTD) return down to 30.90%.

Despite the overall market

downturn, the market breadth remained positive, with 29 stocks gaining and 20 stocks declining.

On the gainers' chart, Julius Berger led with a 10% increase to close at N121 per share, while BUA Cement topped the losers' chart with a 9.93% decrease to close at N114.30 per share.

An analysis of market activities revealed that trade turnover was higher compared to the previous session, with the value of transactions increasing by 44.11%.

A total of 498.27 million shares valued at N11.77 billion were exchanged in 10,645 deals, compared to 477.44 million shares worth N8.17 billion traded in 9,529 deals during the previous session.

Meanwhile, GTCO led the activity chart in both volume and value, with 123.92 million shares worth N5.66 billion traded.

By **Chucks Peter**

A Rivers State High Court in Port Harcourt has dissolved the seven-man caretaker committee of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in the state, led by Tony Okocha, which was previously inaugurated by the party's National Working Committee.

Justice Sika Aprioku delivered the ruling on Monday, responding to a lawsuit filed by Sam Sam Etetegwung, Banarh Ezemoye, and others on behalf of the elected APC executives at the state and local government levels.

In the ruling, Justice Aprioku issued a perpetual injunction against the Okocha-led caretaker committee and reinstated the Chief Emeka Beke-led executive as the legitimate leadership of the APC in Rivers State. Beke is a known loyalist of former governor Rotimi Amaechi.

Court Sacks APC Caretaker Committee In Rivers

The court further restrained the APC's national leadership from recognizing the Okocha-led executive and mandated that they acknowledge the Beke-led elected executive going forward.

The court criticized the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) for supporting the dissolution of democratically elected APC executives, stressing that political party leaderships must adhere to their constitutions and avoid acting with recklessness and impunity.

Speaking to the press outside the courtroom, one of the claimants' lawyers, Chizim Chinda, expressed satisfaction with the judgment.

Chinda stated, "The court agreed with us and ruled in our favor. Regarding the local government level, the Tony Okocha

caretaker committee had even gone as far as appointing individuals to serve on local government caretaker committees. The court also ruled that this was unlawful, as those positions were already filled by duly elected individuals."

Okocha, however, described the judgment as flawed and indicated that the party would file an appeal.

"My party will appeal this ill-fated judgment. It is unfortunate that in Rivers State, the judiciary has become a tool in the hands of a clueless governor," Okocha remarked.

"The judiciary in Rivers State has turned into Governor Fubara's supermarket, where he can obtain any order he wishes, even when there is an existing order from a Court of Coordinate Jurisdiction."

WAEC Withholds 215,267 Results Over Alleged Malpractice

By Lillian Edward

The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) has withheld the results of 215,267 candidates who participated in the 2024 West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) for School Candidates, due to suspected cases of examination malpractice.

This was disclosed by Dr. Amos Dangut, the Head of the National Office (HNO), during the announcement of the results on Monday in Lagos.

Dr. Dangut revealed that the withheld results represent 11.92% of the total number of candidates who sat for the examination. He noted that this percentage is 4.37% lower than the 16.29% recorded in the previous year, 2023.

“The results of these candidates are being withheld due to various reported cases of examination malpractice. The use of mobile phones in examination halls, despite a strict ban, and organized cheating in some schools, remain significant concerns,” Dangut said. He added that investigations are ongoing, and the findings will be reviewed by the appropriate WAEC committee, which will make final decisions regarding the affected candidates.

The WAEC Head emphasised that the outcomes of the committee's decisions will be communicated to the affected candidates through their respective schools. He also encouraged candidates who wish to appeal the decision to do so via the WAEC website.

Dangut reaffirmed WAEC's commitment to addressing all cases of examination malpractice, stressing that the actions of schools, supervisors, teachers, and students involved in such activities undermine the integrity of the educational system. “It is essential that everyone works together to cleanse the system,” he urged.

Providing further details on the examination results, Dr. Dangut reported that 1,814,736 candidates registered for the examination from 25,126 recognized secondary schools across Nigeria. Of those who registered, 1,805,216 candidates actually sat for the exams, with 896,894 males and 908,322 females, representing 49.68% and 50.32%, respectively.

The examination was also administered to students from schools in Benin Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, and Equatorial Guinea, where the Nigerian senior secondary school curriculum is used.

“Out of the total candidates who sat for the examination, 1,685,889 candidates, representing 93.39%, have had their results fully processed and released, while 119,327 candidates, or 6.61%, are still awaiting the processing of one or more subjects due to ongoing issues. Efforts are being made to resolve these issues and release the results within a few days,” Dangut explained.

He further stated that 1,332,089 candidates, or 73.79%, obtained credit and above in at least five subjects, whether or not they included English Language and Mathematics. Additionally, 1,301,941 candidates, or 72.12%, earned credits and above in at least five subjects, including English Language and Mathematics. This marks a 7.69% decrease in performance compared to 2023, where 79.81% of candidates achieved similar results.

Dr. Dangut also mentioned that 109,115 candidates with various special needs registered for the exam, including 145 who are visually challenged, 473 with impaired hearing, 44 with spastic or mental challenges, and 38 who are physically challenged. These candidates' results have been processed and released alongside those of other candidates.

The WAEC Head highlighted several challenges faced during the conduct of the examination, including security concerns in the Southeast, the impact of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) strike, and issues related to registration deadlines. He called for cooperation from schools and candidates to ensure smoother conduct in future exams.

Dr. Dangut also pointed out financial challenges and the effects of inflation, which have significantly increased the costs of conducting the examination. He criticized the collusion of some supervisors with rogue websites to compromise the exam's integrity, stating that those caught have faced consequences.

As the results are being uploaded to the WAEC website, Dr. Dangut encouraged candidates to apply for their digital certificates, which will be available within 48 hours of checking their results. Candidates who have fulfilled their financial obligations can access their results online at <http://www.waecdirect.org> within the next 12 hours.

He also noted that hard copies of certificates for candidates whose results have been fully processed will be ready within 90 days, and urged states indebted to WAEC to settle their debts to enable affected schools and candidates to access their results.

Protest: Kano Gov Relaxes Curfew, 873 Suspects

By Abdullahi Waliu

Kano State Governor, Abba Yusuf, has relaxed the curfew initially imposed to curb the spread of violence following recent protests in the city. The decision comes after the State Commissioner of Police, Salman Garba, reported that normalcy has been restored, with no further incidents of violence.

The police have arrested 873 individuals for various offenses, including criminal conspiracy, inciting disturbance, rioting, theft, mischief, and arson during and after the nationwide #EndBadGovernance protest. Authorities have also recovered a large quantity of items stolen during the unrest.

The curfew, originally set to last 24 hours, was initially reduced

to a 12-hour period from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. as the security situation improved. On Monday, Governor Yusuf announced the complete lifting of the curfew, allowing residents to resume their daily activities without restrictions, as peace returns to Kano.

“The decision to lift the curfew reflects the success of security agencies and the cooperation of the public in restoring peace and order in the state,” according to a statement from the police.

Kano residents have expressed relief and joy at the lifting of the curfew, especially those who rely on daily income to support their families.

One local trader, Alhaji Adamu, who deals in cereals, welcomed the move, stating that “The lifting of the curfew means Kano has returned to its peaceful status.”



L-R: Registrar, University of Ibadan, Mr Ganiyu Saliu; Deputy Vice Chancellor, Administration, Professor Peter Olapegba; VC, Professor Kayode Adebowale; DVC Academic, Professor Aderonke Baiyeroju; and Professor Oyeronke Odunola at the One-day orientation programme recently. ...Photo: UI Directorate of Public Communication

Policemen raided NLC Complex over Investigation, says FPRO

By Olumide Olusgun

The Nigeria Police Force has confirmed that the recent raid on the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) complex in Abuja was part of an ongoing investigation into an international suspect alleged to be involved in subversive activities that pose a threat to Nigeria's democracy.

Speaking on Channels Television's *Politics Today* program on Monday, the Force Public Relations Officer, Muyiwa Adejobi, clarified the circumstances surrounding the August 7, 2024, raid. According to Adejobi, the operation was specifically targeted at the second floor of the NLC complex, where an office linked to the suspect is located, and not the 10th floor, which houses the NLC headquarters.

Adejobi explained, “We recovered evidence to prove that the suspect is a threat to the nation. The man is a suspected subversive element.” He further stated that the police had established a landlord-tenant relationship between the NLC and the suspect, whose syndicate members have already been arrested.

The NLC had earlier reported that heavily armed security personnel stormed its head office around 8:30 pm last Wednesday, seizing documents during the raid. The incident drew widespread condemnation from local and international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International.

However, Adejobi emphasized

that the police operation was not related to the recent #EndBadGovernance protests across the country. Instead, he noted that the raid was part of a broader forensic investigation into the suspect, who is accused of using multiple foreign identities, including those of a Russian and a Briton.

“The NLC is not the suspect here,” Adejobi stated. “We had a target, and whatever it takes, we must get him by all means.” He added that the suspect is known

to travel frequently out of Nigeria, making it imperative for the police to act swiftly to secure evidence.

The police spokesperson also revealed that the raid was not intended to apprehend the suspect at the time but rather to recover incriminating evidence, which they successfully did. He accused the suspect of engaging in activities aimed at “running down the country” and posing a serious threat to Nigeria's democratic process.

“We have uncovered plans

that people want to destroy our democracy and our common heritage called Nigeria, and we cannot keep quiet,” Adejobi said. “We are getting enough help, and we will get this man.”

The police have vowed to continue their investigation, with the NLC likely to be involved in the probe as it progresses. Adejobi assured the public that the authorities are committed to ensuring that those who pose a threat to Nigeria's security and stability are brought to justice.

Man, Two-Year-Old Son Die in Jigawa Building Collapse

By Oyedunmola Olakunle

Tragedy struck in Madabe village, Buji Local Government Area of Jigawa State, as a 30-year-old man and his two-year-old son lost their lives following the collapse of their home.

The incident, which occurred late Sunday night, was confirmed by local authorities on Monday.

Ali Safiyanu, the Information Officer for Buji Local Government, confirmed the heartbreaking event in a statement to reporters in Dutse.

He revealed that the boy's 25-year-old mother, who was also in the building at the time of the collapse, miraculously survived the incident and is currently receiving treatment at an undisclosed hospital.

Safiyanu attributed the building collapse to a heavy downpour that occurred on Sunday night, which

likely weakened the structure, leading to its eventual failure.

The spokesperson for the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) in Jigawa State, Badaruddeen Tijjani, also confirmed the incident.

However, he was unable to immediately provide the names of the deceased and the survivor. Tijjani assured the public that an investigation has been launched to determine the exact cause of the collapse.

This tragic incident comes on the heels of widespread flooding in the region, which wreaked havoc between Thursday and Sunday.

Several villages in Buji Local Government Area were severely affected, with floods displacing around 400 households and destroying approximately 1,000 buildings.

In response to the disaster, the Jigawa State Emergency

Management Agency (SEMA) has begun distributing relief materials to those affected. Many of the displaced persons have been temporarily sheltered in a local school, where they are receiving assistance.

The recent spate of natural disasters in the area has underscored the vulnerability of communities in Jigawa State to extreme weather conditions. Local authorities and disaster management agencies are working to provide aid and support to those affected, while also investigating the circumstances surrounding this latest tragedy.

As the community mourns the loss of life, officials are urging residents to take precautions and remain vigilant during the ongoing rainy season, which continues to pose significant risks to lives and properties in the region.

International Youth Day: Tinubu Applauds Nigerian Youths' Creativity, Resilience

By David Olusegun

President Bola Tinubu, on Monday, commended the creativity and indomitable spirit of Nigeria's youths, highlighting their significant role in driving digital innovation and trends within the country and beyond.

In his message marking this year's International Youth Day, celebrated annually on August 12, Tinubu praised the vibrant energy and creativity of young Nigerians, acknowledging their potential to lead the nation into a prosperous future. The President's Special Adviser on Media and Publicity, Ajuri Ngelale, delivered

this tribute in a statement titled, “President Tinubu Hails Creative Zeal of Nigerian Youths to Digitally Innovate Nigeria to Prosperity and Global Acclaim.”

“On this special occasion to celebrate the youth, President Tinubu assures Nigerians that his administration is here to make their dreams come alive in a sustainably expanding, inclusive economy,” Ngelale stated.

Reflecting on the 2024 International Youth Day theme, “From Clicks to Progress: Youth Digital Pathways for Sustainable Development,” Tinubu expressed confidence in the youth's capacity to transform Nigeria through digital innovation, propelling the

nation to global recognition and prosperity.

“The President acknowledges the strides of the youth in diverse spheres, especially in developing billion-dollar technologies and innovations that contribute to a more prosperous and evolved world,” the statement read.

Tinubu further celebrated the achievements of young Nigerians across various sectors. He recognized the creativity of the youth in Ebute Metta, who, with just a ring light and a camera, generate legitimate income and create captivating content. He also lauded a young woman entrepreneur in Aba, whose

unique fashion designs are gaining widespread recognition, and a young man in Kano, pioneering sustainable agricultural practices through agro-technology.

In his address, President Tinubu emphasized his administration's commitment to harnessing the creative talents of the youth. He announced the relaunch of the Nigeria Youth Investment Fund under the Federal Ministry of Youth Development. The N110 billion fund is specifically aimed at empowering young Nigerians in key sectors to drive sustainable economic growth and development.

Navigating the #EndBadGovernanceInNigeria Protests: A Crucial Moment for Reform

The #EndBadGovernanceInNigeria nationwide protest, which has surged across the country, reflects a deep-seated frustration with the prevailing state of governance. Protesters, drawn from all walks of life, are unified by a common demand for a departure from the chronic mismanagement and systemic corruption that have plagued Nigeria for decades. At the heart of these protests lies a critical link between the removal of the fuel subsidy and the floating of the Naira. These economic measures, while aimed at stabilising the nation's economy, have led to a significant increase in the cost of almost everything, affecting everyday Nigerians.

The resultant inflation has exacerbated the hardships faced by the populace, underscoring the urgency for comprehensive economic reforms.

However, attempts at tackling these issues have been hindered by long-standing corrupt practices, making it rather challenging to implement effective solutions. Nigeria, a nation endowed with vast resources (including human, natural) and potentials, continues to grapple with numerous challenges. Economic instability, inadequate public services, and pervasive corruption are just a few of the issues that have fueled this protest.

The #EndBadGovernanceInNigeria movement is a testament to the collective yearning for a better future, where governance is accountable, transparent, and responsive to the needs of the populace. The protests, which began with grassroots organisations and civic groups, have grown into a widespread movement. It is crucial to recognise that these demonstrations are not just expressions of discontent but

also calls for meaningful reform. The widespread participation indicates a significant shift in public sentiment and a readiness to confront the entrenched political elite.

Among the proposed measures to alleviate the current economic strain, a review of the pump price of petrol stands out as a potential immediate relief for citizens.



Understandably, addressing the cost of governance, particularly the perquisites of political office holders, would demonstrate to the public that austerity measures are being applied universally. Such actions could help rebuild trust in the government's commitment to equitable governance.

However, while the protests are a powerful vehicle for change, they also come with risks. Instances of violence and disruptions, as seen in various states, highlight the need for both the authorities and the protesters to exercise restraint. Security forces must ensure that their responses are proportionate and respectful of citizens' rights, while protesters must avoid actions that could escalate tensions or undermine their cause. Scapegoating will not provide a solution; instead, security

operatives must recognise the limits of their power and avoid actions that could further inflame the situation. It is essential that the military remains uninvolved in civil affairs, respecting the distinct roles of the Minister of Defence and other civilian authorities. Decorum and mutual respect for citizens' rights and the responsibilities of security

the root causes of the unrest. It is vital to engage in constructive conversations that can lead to sustainable solutions, rather than resorting to superficial measures that merely placate the public temporarily.

The protests also bring to light the importance of civil society and media in holding both government and corporate entities accountable. The role of independent journalism in reporting on the protests and the government's responses cannot be understated. It is through transparent reporting and informed debate that the public can remain engaged and demand greater accountability.

Media organisations must continue to provide unbiased coverage, ensuring that the narratives of the protesters are accurately represented. Be that as it may, the #EndBadGovernanceInNigeria protest represents a critical juncture in Nigeria's political landscape. It is an opportunity for both the citizens and the government to engage in a meaningful discourse on governance reform.

The path forward will require commitment from all stakeholders to build a more just, equitable, and accountable system. The nation's future depends on how these protests are managed and whether they translate into concrete changes that address the longstanding issues facing Nigeria.

As the country navigates this pivotal moment, it must seize the opportunity to enact reforms that can pave way for a brighter, more inclusive future. The success of the #EndBadGovernanceInNigeria movement could serve as a beacon of hope, inspiring a new era of governance that truly serves the people.

Politics Feature

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#EndBadGovernanceInNigeria Protest: A Resurgence of Civil Activism in Nigeria

The August 1st to 10th protest has reawakened the conscious of the Nigerian citizen on the governance style of the ruling class. The call for good governance through reduction of governance cost and efficient management of resources birthed the #EndBadGovernanceInNigeria Protest. OLUMIDE OLUSEGUN writes

The EndBadGovernanceInNigeria protest is more than just a political movement; it is a clarion call for change that reverberates across the length and breadth of Nigeria. As a nation often touted as the giant of Africa, Nigeria's history has been marked by a series of political challenges, economic hardships, and governance failures that have left many citizens disillusioned. The protest, which has gained significant traction both locally and internationally, reflects the frustrations of a populace tired of systemic corruption, poor leadership, and the lack of basic amenities. This feature report delves into the genesis, progression, and implications of the EndBadGovernanceInNigeria protest, highlighting its significance in the broader context of Nigeria's socio-political landscape.

To fully understand the EndBadGovernanceInNigeria protest, one must first consider the historical context of civil activism in Nigeria. Since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria has witnessed a series of military coups, civil unrest, and democratic experiments that have often left the populace yearning for stability and effective governance. The post-independence era, particularly the 1970s and 1980s, was characterized by military rule, during which civil liberties were severely curtailed, and the voices of dissent were often brutally silenced.

However, the return to civilian rule in 1999 marked a turning point in Nigeria's political history. The emergence of a nascent democracy brought with it renewed hope for good governance and economic prosperity. Yet, the reality of the subsequent two decades has been far from the aspirations of the Nigerian people. Despite the formal end of military rule, the entrenched culture of corruption, nepotism, and poor governance continued to plague the nation.

The EndSARS protests of October 2020, which initially began as a movement against police brutality, particularly the excesses of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), quickly morphed into a broader campaign against bad governance. This protest was a precursor to the EndBadGovernanceInNigeria movement, as it laid bare the deep-seated frustrations of Nigerians, particularly the youth, who felt marginalised and betrayed by successive governments.

A Nation on the Brink

The immediate catalyst for the EndBadGovernanceInNigeria protest can be traced to the worsening economic conditions and the perceived lack of responsiveness by the government. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the already dire economic situation in the country, with rising unemployment, inflation, and poverty levels. The removal of fuel subsidies and the devaluation of the Naira further strained the finances of ordinary Nigerians, making daily survival a challenge for many.

Moreover, the perceived impunity of political leaders, who appeared more concerned with their own interests than those of the populace, fueled public anger. The government's handling

of security challenges, including the rise of banditry, kidnappings, and insurgency in



various parts of the country, further eroded public trust in its ability to protect and serve the people.

In this context, the EndBadGovernanceInNigeria protest emerged as an expression of the collective frustrations of Nigerians who felt that they had reached a breaking point. The protest was not just about economic hardships but also about the broader issues of social injustice, lack of accountability, and the erosion of democratic values.

One of the defining features of the EndBadGovernanceInNigeria protest is the role of social media in its organization and mobilisation. In a country where traditional media is often controlled by the state or influenced by powerful political interests, social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have become powerful tools for grassroots activism. The protestors utilized hashtags like #EndBadGovernanceInNigeria to galvanize support, share information, and coordinate activities across different parts of the country.

The decentralised nature of the protest also meant that it was difficult for the authorities to suppress it. Unlike previous protests that were often led by identifiable leaders, the EndBadGovernanceInNigeria movement was leaderless, making it harder for the government to negotiate or clamp down on it. This decentralized approach allowed for a more organic and widespread mobilization, with protestors organizing themselves into small groups in various states and communities.

The protest also saw the participation of a broad cross-section of society, including students, professionals, civil society organizations, and even members of the diaspora. This inclusivity was a testament to the widespread discontent with the state of governance in Nigeria, transcending ethnic, religious, and regional divides.

The Government's Response turned Mixed Bag

The government's response to the EndBadGovernanceInNigeria protest has been a mixture of repression and rhetoric. In some instances, security forces were deployed to disperse protestors, leading to clashes and, in some cases, fatalities. The use of force

against peaceful protestors drew widespread condemnation from both local and international human rights organizations, who accused the government of violating the rights of its citizens.

At the same time, the government attempted to address some of the concerns raised by the protestors through policy announcements and dialogue initiatives. For instance, there were promises of police reform, economic relief measures, and more inclusive governance.



However, many Nigerians viewed these gestures as too little, too late, and doubted the sincerity of the government's commitments.

The EndBadGovernanceInNigeria protest also exposed the deep divisions within the Nigerian political elite. While some political figures expressed solidarity with the protestors and called for meaningful reforms, others accused the protestors of attempting to destabilize the country and undermine the government. This polarization further complicated efforts to address the underlying issues that gave rise to the protest.

Civil society organizations played a crucial role in the EndBadGovernanceInNigeria protest, providing legal, financial, and logistical support to the protestors. Organizations such as Amnesty International, the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP), and the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) were vocal in their support for the protestors' demands and in condemning the government's use of force.

The international community also took notice of the protest, with several foreign governments, international organizations, and diaspora groups expressing concern about the situation in Nigeria. The protest attracted significant media coverage globally, drawing attention to the challenges facing Nigeria and the broader implications for democracy and governance in Africa.

However, the international response was also criticized for being insufficient and, in some cases, hypocritical. Some activists argued that foreign governments that maintained close diplomatic and economic ties with Nigeria's government were reluctant to take strong actions that could jeopardize their interests. This criticism highlighted the complex interplay between international diplomacy and human rights advocacy in the context of the protest.

The Broader Implications: A Turning Point for Nigeria?

The EndBadGovernanceInNigeria protest represents a critical juncture in Nigeria's political trajectory. It has brought to the forefront the urgent need for comprehensive reforms in governance, economic management, and social justice. The protest has also underscored the power of grassroots activism and the potential for social media to serve as a catalyst for

change in a country where traditional avenues for political participation are often blocked or manipulated.

For many Nigerians, the protest is a wake-up call for the political elite to take the aspirations and grievances of the people seriously. It is a reminder that the social contract between the government and the governed cannot be taken for granted, and that failure to address the root causes of discontent could lead to further unrest.

The protest has also sparked a renewed sense of political consciousness among the youth, who constitute a significant portion of Nigeria's population. The youth have been at the forefront of the protest, demanding accountability and transparency from their leaders. This generational shift in political engagement could have far-reaching implications for Nigeria's future, as young people become more assertive in demanding their rights and shaping the country's political landscape.

While the EndBadGovernanceInNigeria protest has undoubtedly made an impact, the road ahead is fraught with challenges. One of

the key challenges is sustaining the momentum of the protest in the face of government repression and attempts to co-opt or divide the movement. The decentralized nature of the protest, while an advantage in some respects, also presents difficulties in terms of maintaining cohesion and a clear agenda for change.

Another challenge is translating the demands of the protest into tangible policy outcomes. While the protest has succeeded in raising awareness and putting pressure on the government, the question remains whether it can lead to concrete reforms that address the root causes of bad governance in Nigeria. This will require sustained advocacy, political engagement, and the building of alliances with other stakeholders, including political parties, civil society organizations, and international partners.

The protest also raises important questions about the future of democracy in Nigeria. The government's response to the protest, particularly the use of force against peaceful demonstrators, has raised concerns about the state of civil liberties and democratic governance in the country. If Nigeria is to avoid a slide into authoritarianism, it will need to ensure that the rights of citizens to protest and express dissent are protected and respected.

The #EndBadGovernanceInNigeria protest is a testament to the resilience and determination of the Nigerian people to hold their leaders accountable and demand a better future. It is a powerful reminder that governance is a social contract that requires the active participation of the citizenry to ensure that it serves the common good.

While the protest has highlighted the many challenges facing Nigeria, it has also shown that change is possible when people come together to demand it. The protest has sparked a national conversation about the kind of country Nigerians want to live in and the role that each citizen must play in making that vision a reality.

The protest scheduled for ten days started on August 1st ended August 10th 2024.

As Nigeria continues to grapple with the challenges of governance, economic development, and social justice, the EndBadGovernanceInNigeria protest will likely be remembered as a defining moment in the country's history. It is a moment that has awakened a new generation of Nigerians to the power of collective action.

6 INTERVIEW

"I can see that some people mobilised some very gullible Nigerians, most of them are children, most of them are not educated, to go to the street, to now go against the government. It's a matter of political revenge."



Reducing Governance Cost Important for Development – Kaduna Gov, Sani

Governor of Kaduna State, Senator Uba Sani in this interview with Seun Okinbaloye on Channels TV, Politics Today programme speaks on the protest controversy, curfew among other issues. OLUMIDE OLUSEGUN brings excerpts.

You had come out to say there is no curfew in Kaduna State and everything is under control. Some will say things escalated so quickly, how do you describe the last day and how it has been for you and your government?

In Kaduna, I can say that since yesterday, everything has been calm. Everything is in control. We did not experience any protests today (August 2) in Kaduna. Protests ended yesterday at about 3 p.m. So in Kaduna, we are fine. That was the reason why we did not impose any curfew in Kaduna. That was what happened. Also, the protest started peacefully in Kaduna at about 10 to 11 a.m. But somewhere along the line, some miscreants hijacked the rally. And of course, as a result of that, a few individuals among the miscreants decided to attack about two government offices, as well as looting the house of one very innocent woman. That was what happened in Kaduna but at about 3 p.m., everything was at rest and the protesters went back home. Of course, but what we noticed in Kaduna is that there was a lot of infiltration by some disgruntled elements. That was the reason why we called last week that in Kaduna, we are not against anyone coming out to protest because, being also a member of the civil rights movement and pro-democracy movement in Nigeria in the past, I participated in many protests in this country, and I led the protest myself. But in this case, we realised that some elements within the country, some in Kaduna, probably used these gullible children because in Kaduna, most of the people that came out, were young children between the ages of 15, 16, and 17. So for me, I felt it was really unfortunate. And of course, when I saw some human rights activists speaking with you just now in your studio, I was really surprised because if you are a human rights activist and you are calling for the protest, just like we did ourselves in the past, we led it. We don't sit down in the

comfort of an air-conditioned studio asking people to go out for a protest. We should lead it. We led it. And as a result of that, some of us went to detention a few times in this country that was against the military. And today, we are in a democratic dispensation. I feel if people want to protest, they should come out direct and lead the protest so that they don't leave the protest in the hands of young children that they recruited and they put them on the street and they hide in the studios of national television and talk. So for me, that is my only problem. In Kaduna, we made it clear that whoever wanted to protest could come out. We asked the police to guide them, to ensure that they give them security. But unfortunately, just 30 minutes into the protest, some of these brutal elements probably that were recruited also by some elements hijacked the entire protest and attacked even the police. But of course, we intervened and asked the police not to respond. And I want to commend the police here in Kaduna. I have heard a lot of people condemning the police around the country, but in Kaduna, they acted professionally. They decided to ignore even those who were attacking them. And of course, at a certain point, they only used tear gas because that is the normal convention to use tear gas whenever there is a break of law and order. When people begin to attack or break into shops and offices, certainly they have to intervene at that moment. So in Kaduna, I can say things went extremely well, apart from the fact that some miscreants hijacked the protest. But at three o'clock, like I said, everything went normal. That was the reason why here in Kaduna, we do not impose any curfew. And today, as I am speaking with you, people went out and continued their normal activities and their businesses. And that was the reason why I was really surprised when some people that were calling for this protest, many, many weeks, they were not organised. They led the protest in the hands of children, people that they recruited, but they

did not guide them. That was a problem. But like in Kaduna and many other states around northern Nigeria, I am sure the reason why we witnessed a lot of lootings and vandalism in Kano and other states around the north is simply that they let those people they recruited go out and begin to loot some people's shops. It is unfortunate because when you are calling for the government to do what is right, to address the problem of hunger and many other things, why do we attack the shops of people who are also struggling, the middle class, the downtrodden, doing their businesses? But at the end of the day, they were the victims. So for me, that is not the protest we are talking about.

What are the other incidents that have happened beyond the ones reported?

In Kaduna, as I said, we did not experience any major problems because only Castile and Kadipa were attacked and looted. They were all government agencies. So for me, that was the only incident that happened in Kaduna. But of course, we were lucky because they did not go to the shops of some innocent people like in other states and begin to loot their properties. But of course, even though we are here in Kaduna, we will not be happy to see things that happen in Kano or what happened in Jigawa, what happened in Maiduguri, Borno State, what happened in Niger. It's unfortunate. That was the reason why some of us were a bit skeptical about the motives and the intention of the people calling for this protest. Most of them, I can tell you, were in the television interview with you, why didn't you ask them? Why didn't they lead the protest? Where were they? That is a question journalists should ask. When we called for a protest against the military in Nigeria, we led the protest. In Kaduna here, I led several protests. I led it during the era of the military when we were working closely together with our leader, Chief Gani Fawehinmi, Ransom Kuti, Femi Falana, you know, all of us. Even I heard Ebun Adegboruwa telling them to calm down because I can say that Ebun Adegboruwa was with us. We went to the street with him against the military. I do remember vividly. He knew the meaning of protest. He knew that what was happening today in this country was to the detriment of the downfall of not even the government because these protesters were looting the shops of innocent people, people who are also struggling, and people who are affected by this economic hardship. So that is the reason why I think those calling for this protest should sit down and look at the situation critically. When they are saying, President Bola Tinubu should come out and speak. Granted, we have problems in Nigeria, but most of these problems if we want to be sincere, were inherited by this previous administration. That was what I was saying. Maybe most of them do not have the data and statistics of where we are coming from. If you look at the poverty index in this country, look at where we were in 2023. Look at the problems we are having, just look at where President Bola Tinubu took over this government. At that point, look at where the problem was. And within a year and only one month, if you want to be sincere, nobody will address these problems within only 13 months. So let's be fair. That is the reason why a lot of people were suspecting the motive and sinister of the people calling for this protest.

Are you saying that the protest is not

justified?

Let me be very frank too. Most of us were asking people to allow this protest to speak to the government, to now at least explain their grievances, so that at least people will hear them. But unfortunately, if you ask me, if you want me to be sincere, my opinion will be different from most of the people who are sitting with you in the studio, because I am a veteran of protests in Nigeria. I was in SSS cell, I was in a police cell, and I was in detention several times because I led demonstrations in Kaduna. In those days, I led over 5,000 people to the streets of Kaduna. Many times, I not only took 100 or 500, 200, and 5,000 people to the streets of Kaduna. And of course, I was ready to be detained. I was ready to face the authority because it's a matter of ideology. I believe in good governance. We believe in democracy. That's why we fought for the term of democracy in Nigeria. But what happened in the last two days? I must be frank with you. The leaders of the agitators of this protest should have led it so that they could control these gullible Nigerians who went to the streets and started looting and destroying government properties while we fought the military. I remember in 1991, I led protests against the government. It was the Babangida's government. But the governor then became a civilian governor in 1992. I led the demonstration in Kaduna. Over 5,000 people followed me, but there was never an incident of breaking or anything. We didn't touch government properties. We didn't allow anybody to loot any shop. That was a protest. And the government listened to us. But when you lead children, you stay in your hotel room or outside the country or in the comfort of studios, Channel television, Arise, TVC, talking about protests. What do you know about protests? You should be on the street. If you believe in what I said, the protest is not about speaking grammar.

From your explanation, does it mean that you are saying that there is no organisation, or are you suspecting that the protest was against the Tinubu government and that there are suspicions of some people working for the removal of the Tinubu government from your explanation? Is that what you are saying?

Let me be blunt with you. As a person of concern, because of what happened, I can see that some people mobilised some very gullible Nigerians, most of them are children, most of them are not educated, to go to the street, to now go against the government. It's a matter of political revenge. Okay, let me use this word because most of them lost the election. Most of them never wanted a soldier to be president. But in my own opinion, some of us have been better in this role. Wait, you can change the government through the ballot. You can mobilise people. It's a matter of 2027. We don't mobilise gullible Nigerians, misinform them, or misguide them, but their children are not on the street.

The issues they have raised are issues of anger, hardship, and economic situation in the country, and the downturn that Nigerians are expressing. Are you saying that those are not tenable and those are not valid?

It's valid. In this country, I do not doubt in my mind, there is hardship. A lot of policies of the government are helpful, but I believe it's a matter of time. We need to give the government time to address it. But if you have any grievances, constitutionally, you can come

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INTERVIEW

“I do not doubt in my mind, we inherited a very broken system as a government, we inherited a very bad economy, which was accepted and agreed by everyone in the area, whether you're in the opposition or you are in the ruling party.”

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‘How I led Protest against Kaduna Govt’

out. Like I said, I am not against protests. I have been supporting people who wanted to protest by telling the police in Kaduna, to escort them, give them security, and make sure that you protect them. That's why in Kaduna, we don't have any counter-protest.

Governor Sani, I imagine that you are one of the most experienced governors out of the 36 state governors who have been part of a protest. I imagine that you would have gone to address them or speak to them. Is there a reason why you decided not to?

Let me be fair with you. The day we were escorted to the government house, I was ready and prepared to address them. But when they were coming some groups came out and hijacked the protest. Before coming to the government house, they went to the office of Castelia and Kadipa. Even though Castelia and Kadipa's office is in Kaduna, they are just about 300 to 400 meters away from the government house. On the way, those migrants broke those offices. Vandalised those offices. At that point, I said, no, these are not protesters. These are migrants sponsored by some political elements to go against the government. Because if they have come peacefully, of course, as someone who believes in protest, I will certainly address them. But on their way, they broke offices, vandalised offices, and looted offices. How do I address people like that? What do I tell them? And I asked the police, who is their leader? There was no leader.

You stated some things tonight, and you brought a political perspective into the reasons for this protest. In Jigawa, Borno, Nassarawa, Katsina, and Kano are a few of the states where curfew has been declared in one way or the other, either in whole or in part of the state. And if you look at all of these states, none of these states are in the southern region of the country. They are all in the northern region of the country. And for a student of history like myself, there hasn't been in the last 20 years or so, so much of a protest in the northern part of the country, so much that it will escalate badly to have turned into shutting down a state in the northern region of the country. Most of the protest activities that we see are mostly coordinated from the southern region of the country. These are facts, but I'm not trying to put a theory to it. But since you have put up a narrative, is this fact relevant to what you have said tonight, where we find nothing less than five states of the northern region of the country under curfew as a result of the escalation of this protest? Make sense of it for us.

I will answer it from two perspectives. Number one, I will start with northern Nigeria, where I come from. The reason why I insist that this protest is being perpetrated is sponsored by some elements that want to achieve political revenge against the president and some governors. I have my reason. Let me verify with you. They did not succeed in the southeast. They did not succeed in some states, even in the south-south. But I will tell you why they succeeded in the north. Because when you look at the developmental indices, as we are speaking, facing northern Nigeria, in the north, 70% of our people, as we are speaking, are completely financially excluded. Number of out-of-school children in all of Nigeria, 18.3% are domiciled in northern Nigeria. Number three, if you look at the level of poverty index we have in this country, 65%

of our people in northern Nigeria are below the poverty line. Now, it was very easy for them to misinform, to misguide, and to recruit most of the gullible people. That is why when you see states like Kano, Jigawa, Niger, and Katsina, those children that were on the street, they have burnt most of the offices of government, looted most of the shores that belong to even the middle class and the poor people. That is the reason why I believe there was a level of recruitment. That is one perspective. The second perspective, if you listen to me carefully, is that, look, yes, I agree. These elements I am talking about, may not be from northern Nigeria alone. They are from all parts of Nigeria. But they succeeded in northern Nigeria because of this problem. And why am I angry? Let me be frank with you. They're not that we belong to, including myself. Why do we have this very disturbing developmental index? We had power in the north for more years than any other part of Nigeria. Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu is not responsible for the problems we are facing in the north, including the insecurity we are facing. Let me also give you these statistics. As far back as 2016, there was nothing called kidnappings, insurgency, and banditry in the northwest part of Nigeria. The northwest, Kaduna, Kano, Sokoto, Zamfara, Kebbi, Jigawa, and Katsina. That is eight years from today. Why are we in this situation? And today, most of those elements that took advantage of this problem and instigated the children of the poor, their children were not on the street. That is why this crisis was more serious in northern Nigeria. And that is the reason why there was a lot of looting, breaking of offices, a lot of recklessness in the north. My point here tonight is that if we want to be sincere to ourselves, how do you blame Bola Ahmed Tinubu for these figures, statistics, and data? In my own opinion, every leader in northern Nigeria, whether you are a governor in the last 15 years, senator in the last 15 years, council member in the last 15 years, minister, governor, vice president, president, or even local government chairman, we should be held accountable to this problem. And instead of us to begin to blame President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, we should sit down and look at ourselves in the mirror and address this problem. But when we continue to be in denial, continue to attack the president, or misinform the vulnerable people in northern Nigeria because they are not educated. That was the reason why I came to Kaduna as a governor when I was elected when I signed the executive order that we need to make sure that we bring back at least N2.5 million vulnerable, underserved, and poor people to the financial services sector. As a senator in the last, in the 9th Senate, covering about 90% of the financial services sector in Nigeria, I was the chairman of the committee on banking, insurance, and financial institutions

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Nigeria. So by that, I covered 90% of the financial services sectors in this country. And I know the data and statistics. That was the reason why I was calling on our leaders in the north. That is unacceptable for us to have 70% of our average age remain financially excluded. In Kaduna, in the last four months, we have been able to bring N2.5 million and we are targeting another one million. Most of our unbanked people, how can they benefit from any special intervention by the government.

You have raised this narrative, but I'm wondering how plausible is what you have explained. Because if there is a president that has been elected and confirmed by the court for the next four years, how would anybody be able to remove him from office? It takes away the fact that there are people who are legitimate on the street and asking, based on their agitation, asking of the government to do what the government is meant to do for the people of this country. How do you respond to the agitations and the chatter of demand of these protesters, Governor Sani?

Like I said, if you listen to me carefully, among these protesters, some people certainly came out genuinely. When we led protests in Nigeria, we just announced there would be protests against the social policy of the government. People on their own came out. When I said I led 5,000 in 1992, it is not like I had contact with all the 5,000. But they came out because they know we have good intentions. We spell out our demands. We made it clear. We educated our people. This is what we asked for. In this situation, I can agree with you. There are some legitimate demands, and there are people who come out with genuine intentions. But again, the people are calling out that they took this opportunity of the situation we are facing in this country to infiltrate it or to recruit other people to try to see if they can now come up with something that can bring the reputation, and the integrity of this government. That is a problem.

How do they hope to remove this government if you think that the plan is to remove this government? How will they do it?

I didn't say removing the government, but because I am a veteran of this struggle, you don't have to protest to remove the government. You can't walk toward an anarchy in a country. What they did today in Jigawa, Borno, Katsina, Nassarawa, there are protests. Some parts of Nassarawa will be included in some parts of Niger. What are we talking about? No business activities going on on those sites. Some people have to go out daily to do business to be able to earn their next meal.

Today, they cannot go to open their markets. They cannot do anything. What do you put those people? And those agitators, as I am speaking with you today, in their houses, in air-conditioned, because they're comfortable. So there's nothing wrong with protest, but don't put innocent people into more hardship.

What would you say is a lesson out of this protest? For those of you in the political class and those of you who are at the helm of affairs, the people are asking that you watch how the people of this country are being served. The issue, the hardship, the poor, the vulnerable in this country, what lesson do you think that this protest has portend for the ruling class in this country and the government of the day?

I think the lesson is for everyone, not only the government. The lesson is also for the poor people there in the masses to be careful. I want to make some calls for three groups. Those gullible children who are on the street that was used by these people to come out, next time they call for protest, please, they should ask them to lead the protest. That's number one. Next time they ask for a protest, they should ask them to bring their children to the street. They all have children that are mature and they are adults. That's number two. That's what we did when we were doing protest. We came out. That's the first message I have. The second message I have is as a government, I do not doubt in my mind, we inherited a very broken system as a government, we inherited a very bad economy, which was accepted and agreed by everyone in the area, whether you're in the opposition or you are in the ruling party. That is the consensus. We all agree with that because we're in this country. Now, I believe we must work up and quickly address most of those problems, particularly things that have to do with the reduction of poverty, and creating jobs in this country. Yes, people are talking about palliatives. Even, I am not an advocate of palliatives. I don't believe people should be given palliatives. I believe concrete policies should be designed that will quickly change the fortunes of Nigerians. We have to look at the economy critically and come up with some measures that will quickly now address most of this problem. Farmers in this country, I believe, like in Kaduna, agriculture contributed about 42.8% of our GDP. The same thing with many other states in Nigeria. I believe the President has done a lot in trying to address the issue of agriculture, but I believe a lot has to be done. Our economy needs to be looked into because if you look at it, look at the cost of funds in Nigeria. If you want to do any business, you want to borrow money. As of today, 30% interest rate. I don't think anybody can do business and succeed or survive in this country, because it's also very difficult. So there are many things that we need to address. There's a cost of funds. You go to the bank, you want to borrow money. The interest rate is too high. Someone can borrow money from another country, come to your country, establish an industry, and you can put yourself out of business because you must have borrowed the money cheaper than what you have borrowed in Nigeria. So there are a lot of measures that need to be looked into. Is it the economy? Is it agriculture? Is it trying to also create jobs? So many things have to be done. I agree with that, and we don't have time. Time is on our side.

...Cont. on www.nationaltelescope.com



8 Interview

Tinubu, Atiku, Obi should forget 2027 race, says Kenneth Okonkwo

Former spokesman for the Labour Party presidential campaign council, Kenneth Okonkwo in this interview with Constance Ikoku on Arise News speaks on his controversial defection from the party, and leadership tussle, among other issues. ODEKOLA DEBORAH brings excerpts

You dumped the Labour Party a few days ago, how do you feel about your exit?

First of all, let me say that I am embarrassed by your comment. I just heard from your media station that I dumped the Labour Party. I put up my statement so that it would not be misconstrued. Where did you get that from? Certainly, it is not from the statement that I made.

So you have not left the Labour Party?

I am a privileged member of the Labour Party. Where did you get it from?

So there is no crisis in the Labour Party as it relates to you?

None. There is a crisis in the Labour Party as it relates to the NWC which failed to organise an all-inclusive convention, and I thought that the leader ought to have taken the decisive decision to ensure that having said that the convention should not hold and they held it against instructions. I felt he should have come out.

Against whose instructions?

Against Obi's instructions. He publicly declared that the convention should not be held. Aburi you have to organise an all-inclusive convention in line with the agreement you made in the past, and agreement with the judgment of the court. Abure failed. Then Peter Obi would have gone further to ensure that Peter Obi dealt with Abure's issue having disobeyed him. And then, he didn't and that was why the crisis continued. What I said in my statement was that I am a Labour Party member and I am going to consolidate the Labour Party and I am going to join all the stakeholders that are progressive in mind with the NLC and the National Transition Committee which was set up to organise an all-inclusive National Convention. This is what I said in my statement. So where did you get that from?

So, what's the current state of the Labour Party?

The current state of the Labour Party is that there is no National Working Committee. The National Executive Committee, and all the organs of the party, especially the critical stakeholder, which is NLC. Because the Labour Party is the party for the Nigerian workers. They founded the Labour Party. Yes. So the current situation now, is that Labour Party is moving on, to organise an all-inclusive convention, which will be led by the stakeholders, and the NEC-appointed officers of the party who will organise it. **In the media, on the 28th of July, there were stories that you left the party. So you are telling us that you are still a full-fledged member of the party.**

I am telling you that it is fake news. That is the whole idea of my uploading my statement on social media. That was why I am asking you, where did you get it from? Because the whole idea of uploading it is so that everybody can read it. Is it true that when you want to hide anything from a Nigerian, you put it in a book? No, Arise should have done better. I heard it in Arise News and I was embarrassed. So Arise News can do well by retracting it.

So your statement is on the web and the news story precedes the statement here, and that is where the information comes from. And so you are clarifying again, that you are going to work with the Labour Party?

Yes, to consolidate it.

Some people described you as a mole in the party. And Mr Peter Obi came out with a statement requesting that no one should see you in that light, because both of you are still comrades and brothers. How do you react to that?

Good. Well, I read the mole story by one Obiora, we call him Obiora the dollad, because he purports to be the policy secretary. And have you seen him do interviews, going to represent the Labour Party? Even when the Apapa group was assaulting the Labour Party, the same Obiora and Aburi were sending me to fight on their behalf. And the same Obiora, the dollad, had the effrontery to go to social media, to say Kenneth Okonkwo is a mole. I don't blame him with his bad English. I remember one event when we were on the presidential legal team. That Obiora with his monkey suit, would come and sit where Peter Obi was sitting. And after the event, they would ask him, well, what minutes did you take? Only to discover that he couldn't even take the minutes. And I remember Peter Obi warned me that I don't want to see this kind of people around me. So can you imagine such a person, who cannot even defend the Labour Party, calling Kennedy Okonkwo a mole? That is ridiculous. But I did say that I and Peter Obi have different approaches and different styles of doing things. Our temperaments are different. Peter Obi is a very sweet man and he loves to appear sweet to everybody. And I have always warned my younger ones, do not be too bitter so that they will not spit you out but don't be too sweet so that they don't lick you up. So when Peter Obi wants to be sweet to everybody, that is why they are licking him up. I don't have that kind of temperament. A Peter Obi temperament is, My brother Ken, what you are saying is true. But let us take it easy. But Kennedy Okonkwo's temperament is different. So you see, there is a difference in temperament.

You are disappointed with the party and the way things are going. Do you still see Mr Peter Obi as the leader of the party? Do you still see him as having the capability to help the party build the momentum it had last year up until 2027?

That is what I would have loved him to do. I would have loved the 'Obidients', to be integrated into the party to solidify it. But he doesn't believe in that. He said 'Obidients' are not members of the Labour Party. In Nigeria, and 2027, you are going to face an incumbent. You need a broad-based, powerful political party so that even when you win, you will be able to sustain your votes. I give you an example. When APC saw the majesty of PDP, and saw that even as PDP is dysfunctional and bad, they knew that they needed a very powerful platform to win. Five entities had to come together, sacrificially. And I am talking about the new PDP, ANPP, ACN, half-faction of APGA, and CPC. They had to come together, sacrificially, to form a powerful alliance to overthrow an incumbent. Because in Nigeria, make no mistake about it, these people will rig election. And so it is not just about winning but you have to secure your votes. So I believe that you have to build a strong political party. But he said, in his own belief, he did not promise Nigerians to build a strong political party that promised Nigerians to solve Nigeria's problems. And I am like, you cannot go to solving Nigeria's problems without building a solid political party.

What if members of the 'Obidient' Movement would like to join the Labour Party to build this foundational strong party that you are talking about?

Absolutely. That's what I'm saying. That is what should be done. You cannot leave obedient to be metamorphosed.

So is Mr Obi giving Obidients a direction that they must not join the party?

No, his instruction is that the Obedient Movement is not a political party. And they are not all members of the Labour Party. And my advice is that when we finish the election, let us integrate everybody to come into and solidify the Labour Party. So that we will be a formidable force.

So with this internal crisis, this discord, this disagreement, you are parting ways in terms of the way forward with Mr Peter Obi. Why are you still in the Labour Party? Because it doesn't seem like you will be able to get this together. Why are you still there? Will you be able to get what you want?

First and foremost, I do not have any personal grievances or problems with my brother. I love him and I cherish him. You know what? I have never disagreed with him on anything personal. Do you know why? I have never made any personal request from him. And you know what? Since I was born, I have never lobbied for any political post. And I have never asked for any political money. When I was in APC, I was sponsoring APC. I was giving them money. I never asked for any political position. When I was in APC, I got a secretariat for them, for my ward. I got a secretariat for them, for my local government. And I was sponsoring it throughout my career at APC. So when some dimwits begin to say, is he going back to APC because of money? No, I give money, I don't take money. Because my God said, you are more blessed when you give than when you receive. Because my entrance into politics is for the welfare of Nigerians, I spend for political parties and I demand nothing from them. The same thing happened in PDP when I was in PDP. So it is ridiculous for somebody to say that I want to go back to APC. Go back to APC to look for whom? You know my brother Area's Father said both of them are snipers and not Otapiapia. And I agree. How can you talk about a party that has inflicted and afflicted Nigeria with so much trouble? And somebody is contemplating on going back to APC, to look for whom?

Is the Labour Party finished as it is today?

Labour Party is just beginning. It will be consolidated. You know what, The Labour Party is the party of the Nigerian workers; the NLC and the TUC. Do you think you can defeat them in their party?

So how is that not going to happen? It looks like they have fought.

Peter Obi is an aspirant for political office. It has nothing to do with the political party. Now, if he says he does not believe in a strong political party, it is left for the officers of the party to work hard to consolidate the party. Then by 2027, if he wants to use the party as a platform, he can come in as an aspirant and contest for the presidential candidate. And if he wins, he

wins.

But you know that without the Obidient Movement, and other young Nigerians who are looking for a platform to use in the 2023 election, the Labour Party was dead. So if the Obidient Movement decides to leave the Labour Party. What is next, the momentum is dead.

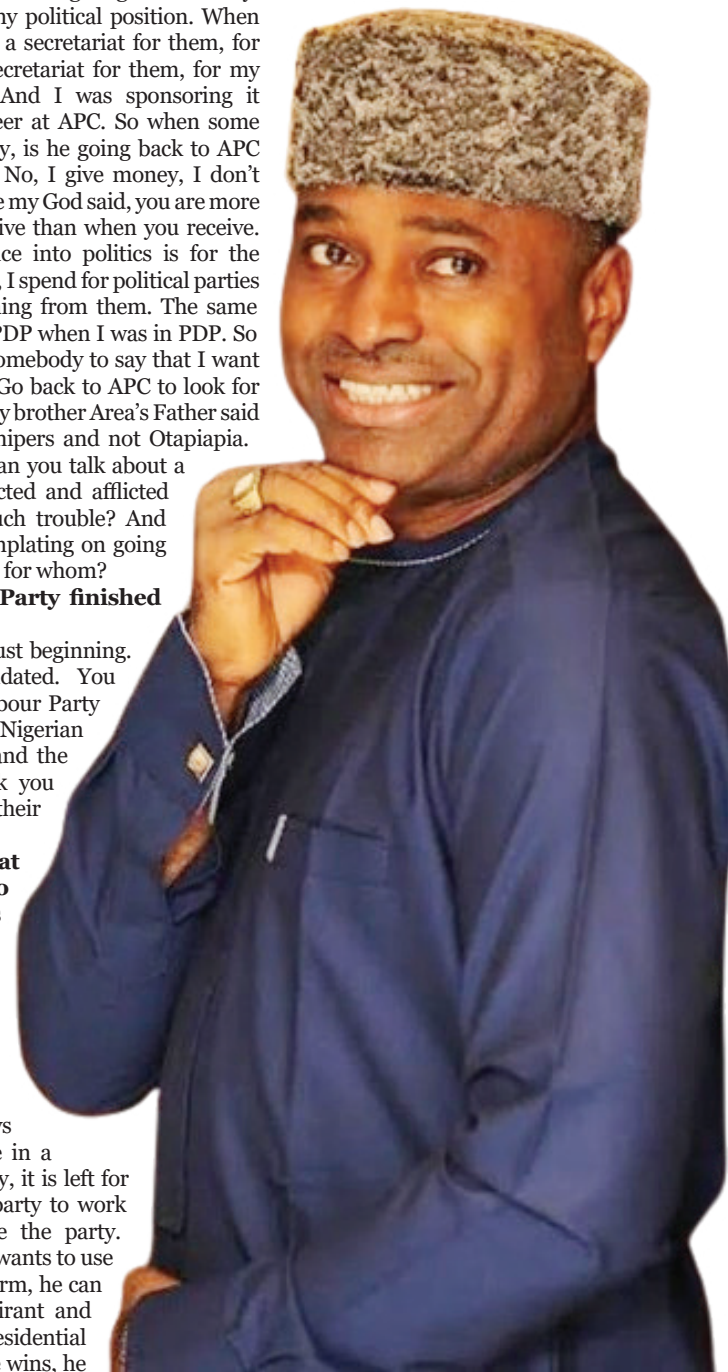
First and foremost, I want to agree with you and that my stand is that all of us should come together and build a strong party. The Obedient should move into the Labour Party and fortify it and then we should look for alliances with other people that have the same objectives as us and consolidate it so that we will have a consolidated fortune. That is the way you can win elections in Nigeria. **There was a time when you would be conscious about the merger. Where are we on that?**

If you have a strong political base, there is nothing wrong with merging.

So there is no merger going on with the Labour Party saying there are no talks anymore?

This is democracy. Talks will continue but who will want to talk with you when they don't know who your leadership is? That is why we have to decisively and quickly organise ourselves in Labour Party so that our executives will be known. Look at the disgrace that INEC just

...Cont. on www.nationaltelescope.com



Interview

9

Fubara is threat to Democracy – Rivers LG Chair

Chairman, Emohua LGA, Rivers State, Chidi Llyod, speaks with Esther Omopariola on TVC programme about the lingering political crisis in the state. ODEKOLA DEBORAH brings excerpts.

Some lawyers say it isn't Uhuru for Martin Amaewhule and other lawmakers in this case, stating that the appeal court only stated that the High Court doesn't have jurisdiction to entertain this suit. How would you react to this?

To say the least, that I am very ashamed that you have lawyers who are not parties, who are not counsels in the matter, but to describe, to run commentaries in matters that they are not part of, nor did they file any processes, or how were they amicus curia in the process. Esther, allow me to lay the foundation of how all of this began so that some of you can also help us. It does appear that most of your colleagues are part of the problems that we are having. I first recall that this whole issue started shortly after the State Assembly was bombed. And when the State Assembly was bombed, there was no question as to who was Speaker or who had lost his seat. The Assembly met on a Monday and immediately suspended its leader, who was the Rt Honorable Edison Ehie and others were suspended, those who the leadership of the House accused of being part of the bombing of the State Assembly. Then this continued until the 11th of December when

the Rt Honorable Chike Martin Amaewhule and 25 others announced their defection on the floor of the House to the All Progressive Congress. Now Esther, recall that a day or two after, the Rt Honorable Chike Amaewhule immediately approached the courts. He filed a suit in the Federal High Court, Abuja. Now the cases of Rt Honorable Martin Chike Amaewhule and 25 others against INEC and others. Note that the DSS, the IGP, the Rivers State Government, and the People's Democratic Party were part of this suit. And this matter was still before Justice E.U Okorowo, and Justice Okorowo made an interim order for parties to maintain the status quo. As at this time, there was no question as to the speakership, or otherwise, of Martin Amaewhule. That order by Justice Okorowo later metamorphosed into an interlocutory order. That matter is still subsisting. That order has not been challenged.

On this matter, we understand that the Appeal Court was silent on the status of the lawmakers in question.

No Esther, if you allow me I will get there. The Appeal Court wouldn't have been silent. Something made them go to the Appeal Court.

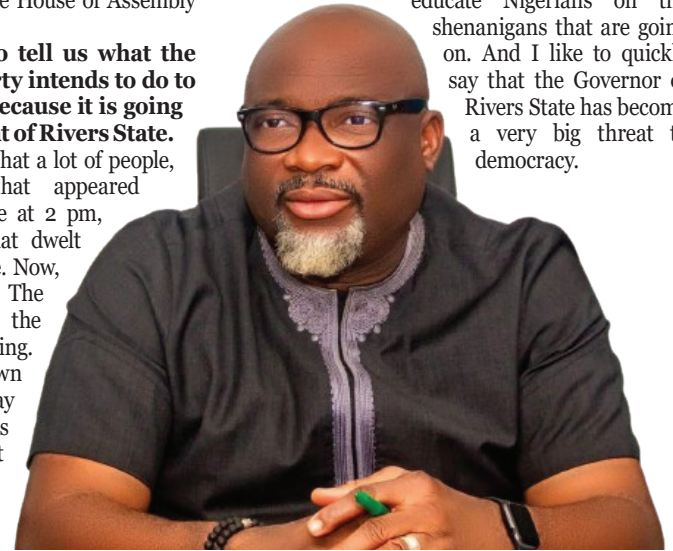
Why did Martin Amaewhule appealed. What did he appeal? Martin Amaewhule appealed that the interlocutory order made by Justice CN Wali of the State High Court. Justice Wali gave an order that stopped Martin Amaewhule and his colleagues from parading themselves as members of the Rivers State House of Assembly, having lost their seats. This was the order that gave rise to the appointment of that one fellow, Victor Oko-Jumbo, and two others, who masquerade as members of the Rivers State House of Assembly today.

We would like you to tell us what the government or your party intends to do to address this situation because it is going to affect the development of Rivers State.

I would like to say this, that a lot of people, including the fellows that appeared earlier on your programme at 2 pm, including one barrister that dwelt on misinforming the people. Now, the law is not emotional. The law does not see through the eyes of barrister Higher King. The law sees through its own eyes. And for those who say that the Court of Appeals just said the lower court has no jurisdiction, it is insipid, it is ineffectious, it is vacuous, and to say the

least, it is patronising. You know, in Rivers State, unfortunately for us, everybody has been called to the bar, but only very few people parade the law degree. People now give wrong commentaries on the way that it will suit them. I heard a lawyer say that three people can pass a budget. When the judgment of Justice J.K. Omotosho of the Federal High Court of Abuja had already nullified that act by the Governor of Rivers State to say that it was

ineffectious. So we need time to educate Nigerians on the shenanigans that are going on. And I like to quickly say that the Governor of Rivers State has become a very big threat to democracy.



We will tackle malpractice in Edo, Ondo

The Deputy Director ICT of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Lawrence Bayode speaks with Geoffrey Uzono on Channels TV on the commission's preparation ahead of the governorship election in Edo and Ondo States as well as the Warri South Constituency Controversy, LILIAN EDWARD brings excerpts

I had a conversation with a CSO representative and they are saying that they envisage there may be a lower turnout of voters than the previous year because last time the election was held, I can remember clearly that about just 10% of the entire population of Edo state came out to decide who their governor becomes. Are you concerned about this as an electoral umpire?

Yes, of course. The commission is always concerned about the turnout when the commission conducts an election. But on the commission part, the commission is doing its best. The voter education department is doing its best to ensure that information that is needed gets to the electorate and that they turn up on the day of the election. So we are doing our best. Just like I

earlier, because INEC is concerned each time an election is held when we have a low turnout. At any point the commission is conducting an election, the voter education department of the commission is always on top of the game to ensure that information gets to the electorate that will make them go out on the day of the election to vote for the candidate of their choice.

One of the major parts of any electoral process as we saw in 2023 is the transparency in the process. So walk us through what is expected. Are we following strictly some of the things we have had in the past electronic votes with the BIVAS?

We will have the IREV up and running and we will see results in real-time. I want us to just walk us through that process and what we should be expecting. Let me correct one impression. We are not voting with the BIVAS. We are doing accreditation with the BIVAS. It is deployed to accredited voters on the day of the election before they are allowed to cast their vote. The BIVAS will also be used to upload the results at that level. INEC referred to that result form as EC88. That BIVAS is used to capture that result after the poll, after the presiding officer has sorted, counted, and announced the result at a particular poll unit. The result is entered into that form, the result

sheet for EC88. After he endorses the result, the polling agent signs on that result and the BIVAS device is also used to capture that sendorsed result and is uploaded to the IREV. Again, I like to say that the IREV is not a coalition system. It does not collect results. The IREV is there to show the electorate that INEC is transparent in what it is doing. It does for people, the public to view the result of the election for a particular poll unit on the day.

I understand perfectly how it works. Maybe I mixed up my words. We have been part of the electoral process for a while, so we understand the entire process. We are talking about the integrity of the process this time. Explain further what you mean by it is not a coalition system, it is just for people to see. And that people to see is almost as important as any other thing as far as elections are concerned. Because that was a big deal in the last presidential election.

You want to draw me back to the presidential election, but I think the commission has since released a report on that election.

No, my question is, are we going to be seeing the results in real-time?

As soon as elections are over in all the polling units and the presiding officers have done what I just narrated earlier, the next thing is for the presiding officer to capture the photo of that form and transmit it to the IREV. If that polling unit, maybe that location is a blind spot, maybe there is no network for any particular network provider, then the system is designed as soon as you leave that location and you are moving to the collation center, anywhere there is a network, even before you get to the collation centre, the system transmits the result to the IREV and as soon as the result gets to the IREV, then it is therefore available for the electorate to see the result.

What is INEC doing to check some of the things we saw in Kogi, for instance, where we saw pre-filled results and thank God alarm was raised and, well, we haven't seen much in terms of prosecution and how that played out. Some of the

malpractices could be carried out by some of the mischievous commission elements. What other stronger action should we be expecting for any form of unlawfulness from anyone as far as the commission is concerned in this process?

The commission does not support any staff, either ad hoc or its permanent staff doing the wrong thing on the day of the election. You know that when the issue of Kogi was raised on the day of that election, it was on the news what the commission did. The incident was investigated and the commission did what was supposed to be done. Again, we learn from every election. Why? Because the commission is a learning organisation. We learn from previous for future elections. So what happened in Kogi about the pre-filled results, I don't think you will see such in the upcoming election in Edo and Ondo.

You can weigh in on this particular conversation about Warri South's constituency, where we understand that the delimiting and delineation will start soon. But the argument has been that there are two cases involved here. One was the alteration that was done from the 1992 gazetted constitution. And, of course, that was challenged and judgment was gotten. And there is this other one from the Supreme Court.

The commission is a law-abiding organisation and I can tell you that the commission will abide by the judgment of the highest court of the land in carrying out this exercise.

The reason I ask that question is because years back the pro-ishekiri group, had actually started a contempt proceeding against INEC because they said INEC had said they had obeyed the court order and even swore an affidavit to it. So what will be different this time?

Just like I said, the Supreme Court is the highest court of the land. If the Supreme Court has ruled on this matter, then INEC as a law-abiding organisation will abide by the judgment of the Supreme Court.

10 INTERVIEW

A party may be strong enough to win the election but doesn't have enough candidate material from certain parts of the country at a particular time. How do you then select your prime minister from that part of the country?



Europeans don't want Africa's Development, says Ex-minister

Former Minister of Agriculture, addresses issues of governance structure, Local Government, under development, and other matters in this interview with Laolu Akande, on the Inside Sources Programme of Channels TV, OLUMIDE OLUSEGUN brings excerpts.

If you look at where we are now as a country, do you say that we are on the right direction?

I think we are striving to get it right. And usually the pains of tutelage are very intense. I think we are heading there. We understand what the problems are. We have to educate our people. We have to industrialise. We have to feed well and maintain peace, law and order. In all of those areas, I think we are heading somewhere. But the journey is slow and tedious and is full of challenges, some of which we don't have the resources to meet. But we are getting somewhere.

From 1999 up to now, we have had 25 years of uninterrupted civilian rule. Would you say that we are getting more of the democracy dividend and how would you compare this period from 1999 to our previous experience with other republic as a nation?

The other republics were essentially military. The problem with the military regime is that it is not democratic. And I often say if we were to compare Nigeria with India, India became independent on the 15th of August, 1947. I was 13 days old. Same day with Pakistan. And before India became independent, Winston Churchill, the great hero of the World War, had said that India could not be a country. That it was a land of warring religious bigots and tribal and ethnic warlords, and therefore could not survive unless Germany sent troops commanded by Gestapo officers to keep law and order. That was Winston Churchill, as Prime Minister of the UK. But between that 1947, August 15th, and today, there has never been a coup in India. On the other hand, Pakistan has a different story. No elected government in Pakistan has ever finished its tenure. And they got independent the same day. So you can see the beauty of democracy. It's very messy sometimes, but it's better. Because in India, the great benefit of steady democracy is that India has one of the most powerful judiciaries. Politicians are frightened to death of the judiciary in India. Nobody escapes them. And even though India hasn't finished dealing with poverty, India is making progress. They are getting to the moon, they are inventing things, and it is the fastest growing economy in the world now.

With that huge

population, ethnic and religious differences, India has maintained a democracy. They have just finished an election. The military tried. They did their bit here. But when they came in 1966, they broke down a system that was evolving. The regions were very much on their own. Each of the regions had a diplomat in London. I remember Okorodudu, whose son I met at King's College, was agent general of Western Nigeria in London. Jolly Yusuf Tanko was agent general of Northern Nigeria in London. And I think it was a guy from the East, who was representing the East. But we carried on. All of them had their agents separate from Nigeria Ambassadors. The disruptions created problems. The coups happened and disrupted a lot of things. Brought in very bitter ethnic feelings. So when we got out of that and became a democracy in 1999 again, we thank God for that and luckily, we had a strong man like Obasanjo who came along. I became chairman in 2001. So we did make some progress and whatever it is, a democracy is preferable. Certainly.

For the most part, you don't normally see any distinct distinction between the political parties. What is meant to be the expectation or the role of the political party in the government?

In 1979, I was an NPN, House of Assembly Deputy Speaker. Then in 82, Shagari called me to Lagos. And I remember that once in a while, if Adisa Akinloye phoned Shagari and we were at a cabinet meeting, Shagari would stand up to go and answer the call. He would Stop the meeting and go and answer. Party was that strong then. And Shagari himself, being a democrat, respected the chairman. Parties have weakened substantially because they haven't gone beyond machinery for conducting elections and then retiring to partial oblivion after the election. It is something that has bothered me a bit. When I was chairman, I did say that a party must hold conferences. I put the idea

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President Obasanjo and he liked it. We had one. At which he explained the party policies, where he was heading, and the problems he had.

And this was in the first term of office?

Yes, but there were people in the party who didn't like that, who complained that I was arrogant and I had no business calling the president to account. And I said, no. We produced him. I can tell you some of the stories that happened. When we were about to pick candidates in 1999, one or two northerners came up and they wanted to contest. Abubakar Aminu wanted to contest. And at a meeting in Jerry Ghana's house at night began at 8 p.m and it ended at 4 o'clock in the morning. Solomon La, Chief Awoniyi, Iyiocha Ayu, Jerry Ghana and so on, were persuading Aminu not to run. Aminu said he was going to run. And we said, no, this thing must go south. And then the arguments, you know, the south has economic power, then fine. They didn't take it from you, they built it. But that's not a reason for the north to keep power permanently. The argument went, you can't believe it, one of the elders actually burst into tears. We took him to the bathroom, washed his face.

One of the northern elders?

Yes, we were saying, look, in particular, after June 12th, let's not take the south or anybody for granted. This country is better together than splitting up again and all the chaos. Around 4 o'clock in the morning, finally we persuaded him. He said he was going to run. And he argued also that the only position that the north could have in the system was to be at the political helm because southerners control the banks, the industries. Yes, that's not a defense. So he agreed. He said he would run. He wanted to run as vice president. Fine. Run as vice president. But allow the south. After June 12th and the trauma, we can't tell the south again to sit there. It's our (north) business to run the country. And at the Jos convention in 99, there was no northerner. You had Ikweme, Douglas, Jim Obodo. I can name all of them. So I said we should carry on with this tradition of party conferences. And I give them the example. The oldest political party in Africa is the ANC, founded in 1912 in South Africa? Whoever you are, the party is bigger than you because the party produces you and then you go on. And it worked.

You served in the APC government from 2015 to 2019. I think that the promises that the party made in 2015, by the time the Buhari administration ended, it seemed as if it didn't do a complete job. What do you think?

Well, let me again say this. When government takes off, the pressure on the president and the governors can be absolutely horrendous. What is the cause of the pressure? The poverty in the environment. Every day, at least 10, 15 people want to see the president for their personal problems like appointments, and favours. And he dares not say, I don't want to see anybody. We put him there, now he doesn't want to see us. It is a very bad score. So he has to see them but some of the most brilliant ideas he wants to pursue, he keeps pushing away. Until he gets to the routine of just cancelling meetings, memos, approvals, and so on. And that occupies his entire schedule. It is

a very difficult thing to manage. So you will find that no matter how determined he is, how hard he tries to pursue his agenda, he declines. It is the same thing at the state level. The governors go through a lot of pressure. People don't know this. The entire elite class would like to see the governor one day or the other. They have a favour they want. My mother died. I have no money to bury her. My daughter is getting married. We suffered for you. I want money. I am going abroad. I have a health problem. I am broke and so on. And each person of some prominence would like to take this problem to the governor personally. And believe you me, the governor can go to bed at 2 a.m., wake up at 7 or 8am, and believe me, to read his files would be a problem because if he doesn't see them, they take offense. Yes. We made him governor, now he doesn't want to see us. So the societal problem, the poverty, the inequality in the economic system, makes governance very difficult. And if you sit there and say, I am a technocrat, I just do the work, I don't care, and you lose the next election. History may turn around and say, he did very well, but you have lost because that is not what counts on Election Day.

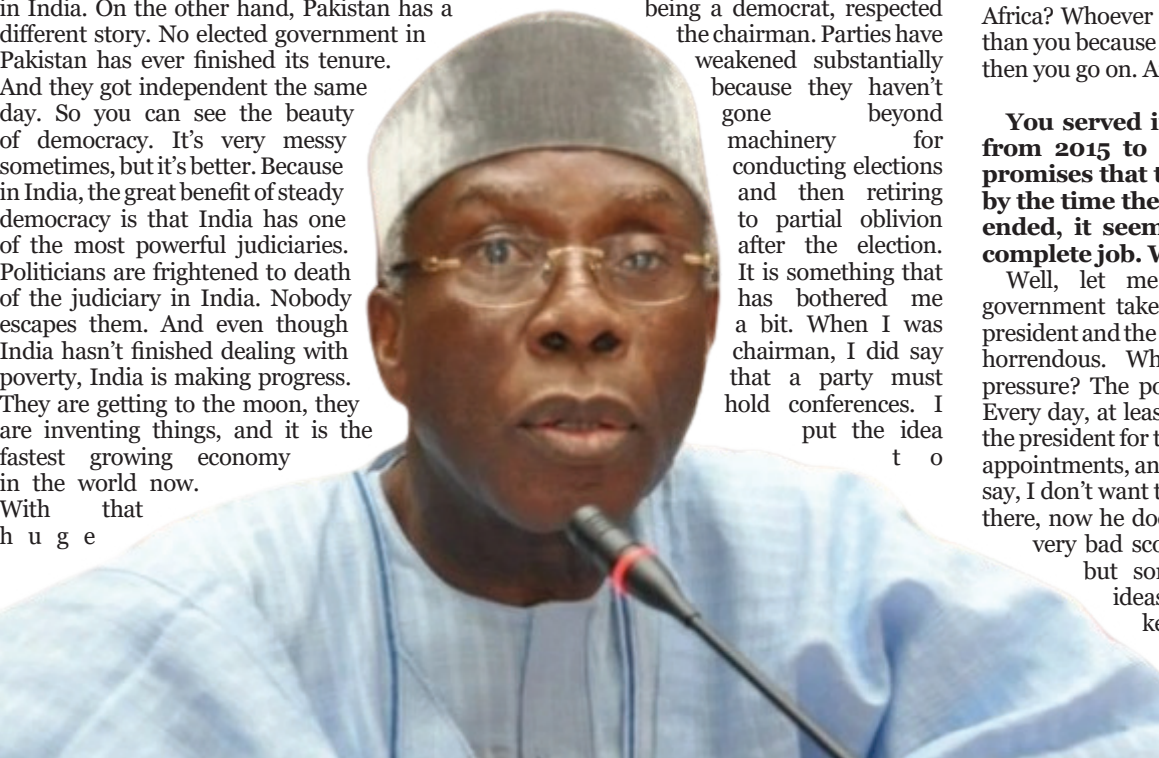
So, this seems like a conundrum. How is this meant not to affect development of the country because the president and the governor have been elected to deliver to the people. What kind of scenario must we have to deal with this kind of situation?

That is what I said about these conferences. Transfer the load of things that don't need to come to you. Because a governor, a president, my God, a president is a slave worker. He works. Sometimes you wonder, do they sleep? Because the number of problems in the head at the end of each day, diplomatic issues, security matters, the budget, the cabinet, your health, all that comes together in one person. And it's big. So it's about saying, during this conference, I have some trusted elders. You deal with this problem and report to me. You deal with that. This is what I suggest. You say, no, it won't work because in this area there's X, Y, Z. Okay, put it together, let me know. It's easier for him to take that advice and move on because the job on his table is extremely huge. And so we need to look seriously. A democracy is not just an election day matter. You have to keep in touch. You need to send people to do so. And get the feedback and let you know because the burden of the job is extremely huge.

Just to back up what you said, Chief, I observe that in the U.S., for instance, so they have think tanks. Some are supported and sponsored by the Democratic Party and the other by the Republican Party. When there is a Republican president, he hires from the people who were in the think tank when Democrats were in power. The same thing is done when you have Democrat President. It seems that this may be the kind of innovation that we might develop. What do you think?

It would be a great idea because otherwise, the president alone is overwhelmed. We need to do that. It is a system which some people say we shouldn't have inherited. We should have stayed with the parliamentary system. I don't see anything wrong with the presidential constitution, but we need to design structures to support it. And as you

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INTERVIEW

"We have to educate our people. We have to industrialise. We have to feed well and maintain peace, law and order. In all of those areas, I think we are heading somewhere. But the journey is slow and tedious and is full of challenges, some of which we don't have the resources to meet."

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'Splitting Nigeria Dangerous'

on us for your toothpicks, your pins, your erasers, and your pencils. Don't do anything because if we industrialise, they lose. That's the plain truth. I am not sure anybody got into those details. That's Jeffrey Sachs. He's always complained about it. He and Paul Krugman, Nobel Prize winner and economic professor. They warned against SAP.

Even the US House of Representatives had a committee that said that structural adjustment had never helped any developing country. But we got into it. So today, the

out? Nobody may mention that to you. It's a security issue. Now, you need an expert to say, look, it will cost you so much. Hang this satellite, it watches your borders because you can't build a wall around Nigeria's borders. From Badagry to Sokoto to Maduguri, down to Rivers and to Lagos. It is 4,076 kilometres. What kind of wall are you going to build? But the satellite can tell you. Control rooms all over. Smugglers, bandits, Boko Haram, whatever. So as time goes on, this is the kind of team that needs to support a president because he is overwhelmed.

But the people will not take that excuse at all.

No, they won't. It's not an excuse, but this is the reality. And so it's fine-tuning governance that will help. Pass the load to guys whose job it is to do this particular thing and feed you back and you stay on top of it.

Don't you think the problems can get a better addressing if you have a president or a prime minister through the parliamentary system who is sitting in parliament to take questions, who doesn't have an opportunity to hide unlike the presidential where President sits in the villa and sends a special assistant or the ministers? In a parliamentary system, the president is held to more account daily, and he must answer publicly. What do you think?

Well, you know why that's difficult here? We are talking about rotation. A party may be strong enough to win the election but doesn't have enough candidate material from certain parts of the country at a particular time. How do you then select your prime minister from that part of the country? Otherwise, one part of the country can continue being prime minister forever. It's a danger. It happened in the UK. William Pitt, the elder, was prime minister for 20 years and handed over to his son, William Pitt, the younger, for another 20 years. 40 years of father and son. Nigeria wouldn't accept it. The point you made about his involvement and presence, it's very valid. The other point is the cost of running the presidential system, which is a bit too high. That can be fine-tuned because we're also here arguing about zoning. One part of the country may dominate this business of being prime minister for too long and alienate the other parts. So there is merit in what you have said, and yet there are difficulties in implementation.

We have a federal constitution, where they say the two-tier or three-tier government, the federal, state, and the local governments. Some of the issues that affects the people are health, education and they are actually on the concurrent list and some are on the residual. But you find out that there is a lot of focus on the federal government, even for issues that are meant to be sorted out by the local and the state government. What do you say to that?

We are among the only three countries in the world practicing this kind of constitutional democracy. In the U.S., the federal, the state, the counties. In Nigeria, the federal, the state, the local government. Now Brazil is coming along with what they call the municipalities, very much like the local government. In theory, it should be a fantastic system of government. It should be great, that nothing is left out. The most minute elements in the

local government have to be dealt with by the local government chairman. And the state government is dealing with the federal government. Here, you have a problem. Every little thing that happens, we blame President Tinubu, we blame Buhari, we blame whoever is at the center. Now, the elite who do the blaming and the complaining hardly go to their local governments. On election day, most of them don't even vote. They have either gone abroad, they don't want any wahala, they have gone abroad, and they don't have time but they are very vocal, lashing at governments as well. Here you have a system, which unfortunately is not working. If it were working well, a lot of these problems would be dealt with. You have a governor in the state, and in the state there are 10, 15, 20 local governments and the local government system is failing. We had a meeting at the Army Policy Center about eight weeks ago. The Sultan of Sokoto and former Head of State, Abdulsalam were there with about 11 governors. I presented a paper about the chaos in the north. And I asked them, Your Excellencies, tell us the truth. Is your local government system working? Two of them got up and said no.

Two of the governors?

Yes. One of them said he had had to pay about N7 billion debts owed by local governments. What did they achieve with it? They couldn't see anything. So, supervision. Number two, funds are shared out. Since the removal of subsidy. The quantum of cash reaching the federal, states and local governments has gone up. From N720 billion on the average, when I was in government, increased to N1.2 trillion. You would expect, therefore, that some money is going down there. Go to the local government. Most of us, the political elite, don't go home unless there's a burial or some chieftaincy stuff. We don't go there. These are the people who deliver the votes. On election day, you see widows and old women waiting patiently, smiling with their cards to vote for us. After the election, we seem not to remember them anymore. Because, where is the vote for the local government? It goes to a so-called joint account. And the rumor is that some governors will give the chairman some pocket money and tell him to take a walk. Now, primary schools are broken down. Children are lying on their bellies to read and write in the classroom because there are no desks. Some schools now recruit teachers who have retired to come back and teach on a salary of N5,000 per month. I have seen this myself. You don't see a roof of the primary school. You don't see a maternity where a pregnant woman can be taken to deliver. In some places, they put her in a wheelbarrow to try and push her to deliver. Some die bleeding. No exaggeration. And each month, there is money being released. But where is it? This is the crime that the political class is committing against the people. On the other hand, on election day, it's these same people who line up more faithfully than all we noisemakers here to vote. So, what I want to say to Nigerians is if you don't want the local government system, scrap it. If it were allowed to work, it would be a fantastic system. Because we, the elite who criticize, don't see this point. Much money is going, N300 million, N400 million and it disappears. Where does it go? And so, we are

...Cont. on www.nationaltelescope.com



said, people have to be there working on issues and problems.

What do we do about this?

The president doesn't have time.

But just like President Tinubu said, they asked for the job.

Yes, they did. But ask them now. Imagine a man like Bola Tinubu, he is my friend. Personally, he is a very kind person. Today, he has taken an economic step, which every presidential candidate said they would take. Remove subsidy. He has removed the subsidy. Now, there are unintended consequences and unexpected developments. That couldn't have been obvious to any of them as candidates when they took the steps, when they were promising that.

I guess they would know that it's going to cause some discomfort.

Yes, but not as intense as what we have. And today, people blame them, oh, he came to make us suffer. No. Which president wins an election to make people suffer? It's not true but now, he's here. And it's so intense, so widespread, that it definitely bothers him. The cost of garri, yam and tomato. For God's sake, what do my people eat? These things are so expensive. Now, Labour wants their pay hiked. He calculates how much impact it will make on the entire budget of the country. And he realises it can only go so far. And Labour says, whatever you give us within this range can't help. Those are problems that nobody really anticipated in detail at the time the Europeans were telling us remove subsidy. Right? And I have my own views about some of the advice we get from Western Europe. A few days ago, I heard a comment by Jeffrey Sachs (an American economist and public policy analyst, professor at Columbia University). An advisor to the United Nations on economic matters. I admire him because he has never accepted SAP (Structural Adjustment Programme). You know what he said? He said he is not sure if the advanced economies of the world will want to see an industrialised Africa. In other words, hey, you niggers there, stay there. You have raw materials, we will buy from you but depend

president now carries the load and takes the blame. Which is where a think tank is necessary. It will go through all the details of the scenarios. If you do this, what happens? If we don't do this, what goes on? And then present them and explain them to the president. He makes a choice based on the advice and the resources available.

Part of the reason why it seems to be something that makes sense is that there is loss of institutional memory. APC has been in power since 2015 up until 2023 but because of what seems to be the detachment of the lack of involvement of the party, I am not sure that the current administration is benefiting from the level of information and experience that exists within the party. There is disconnect between the party and the administration and therefore, there is no institutional memory benefit.

Absolutely. This is exactly why I said, even at the level of the party, those conferences and think tanks and documentation, you need to keep reviving them and representing them. Presenting them to a man who is overwhelmed by work and issues. We find a solution in some of the things the think tank had 10, to 15 years ago. But like you said, the party has a manifesto and you use it to win the election. And when you get there as a president, there are things that you could never have imagined in your manifesto. The security complications today. No matter what anybody said, the manifesto could never have gone beyond, we shall strengthen the military and improve police services, and pay them better to keep peace. That manifesto does not do the work of a committee of experts that will tell you that violence is being imported from across the borders by fanatics of different convictions, who are going to come in large numbers. And that small arms multiplication in the zone will increase. One expert in that committee may tell you, okay, why don't we set up a system like the American Condor satellite, where you can sit in a control room and watch every bit of your borders, actually see people moving in and

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They should give the government a chance. And the reason why they should have realistic hopes is they should know that this government came at a time. Even the election is enough to tell Nigerians everything.



Tinubu working hard to solve Nigeria's problem, says Jamiu Abiola

Special Assistant to the President on Special Duties, Mr. Jamiu Abiola, speaks on the on efforts of President Bola Tinubu to resolve the country's challenges, and nationwide protest, among other issues with Seun Okinbaloye, DEBORAH ODEKOLA brings excerpts

You work for the government from the office of the vice president on special duty. And in the books that you have written, try to flip through and get a sense of what your thoughts are about the presidency and how what your father did and all whatnot. But when you see what is happening on the streets of Nigeria today and the agitation on the minds of many Nigerians, what do you think is going on in our country and the way to fix it?

Well, what is happening in Nigeria goes on to prove that sometimes, it is easy to forget the past. A lot of Nigerians are looking at this president as any other president because a lot of them have experienced broken promises from one president to another. So as far as they're concerned, anything that seems difficult is another broken promise. It's like somebody that has been in marriage like five times and always disappointed. Even if he married a good person, he would think, oh, any small thing he would be looking and trying to pick. But that is our job, is to let people know when we see that things are getting out of hand, we are going to come out. I will come out and let people know the truth from my perspective. First of all, democracy was a very difficult fight. If you know what happened in Africa in the 80s with African leaders, those of them that stepped down, they had ruled for 20 years and they were like 70-something years old. I mean, this was a time in which people were very rich and very powerful. So the people who came out to fight for democracy are exceptional. And where I am going with this is the president that we have now is a different kind of president.

What makes him different?

He is a different kind of president because he is a president who believes in democracy. He is a president who believes in the common man. He is a president who loves the common man. And when I see all this that is happening, it is my job to remind people about who they are talking about. This man is Senator Bola Ahmed Tinubu, a man who could have left the democratic struggle but stood to fight for it, risking his life, risking everything he had. So he is not like the other people that have come and are disappointed. That is why he needs to be given time. He has the credit. He is like you in the United States, you have a good credit rating, and you can apply to get a loan because they will look at your credit record and they will give you, as opposed to someone who doesn't have a good credit record. So this man has become the president in just one year and two months he has been serving, a lot of things he has done have been unprecedented.

If it is unprecedented, why are people on the street?

People are on the street because number one, it's like now, this is channels. Do I work here? I don't. You work here, right? Let's assume that the owners of channels say I want Jamiu Abiola to become the Managing Director and they put me to work here. And I come in here and you tell me this is how the books are and this is how things are. And I come here and I make promises to people based on what you have told me. And then I come, I find another thing entirely and I'm trying to work it out. And it would take like almost two years for you to start seeing the results. Should I be blamed for what other

management people did or not?

But you promised and asked for the job and the president said I asked for the job, don't pity me. I will get it done.

Yes. And that's why he has four years. The only person who knows everything is God. He is the President of Nigeria. Since he has gotten there now, what has he been doing? I'll tell you some of the things he's been doing because people that are protesting, of them, have not sat down to think about what he has been doing.

So those who are protesting are not being fair to the president?

No, they are emotional. But anybody can get emotional. And that is why I am here, to also let them know some of the facts. And by the grace of God, when we now tell them some of the facts, a lot of them will say, oh, wow. That is where I'm going. First of all, we have a president that set up a fund to come and take care of people that are not, you finish, you have your NYSC, you haven't gotten a job. The federal government, for the first time, is going to be giving you an allowance every month till you get a job once you have your NYSC. The other thing the president is going to do is that we have a programme that we want to create three million jobs for people of high

tech. 200,000 people have already benefited. This is not something that is a pipeline, something that is already happening. Rome wasn't built in a day. There is also the subsidy removal loan scheme, which they have been giving out to a lot of families. 600,000 people have benefited 50,000. Of course, it's not enough, but it is a start. We have student loans. Whenever anybody tells the president that, oh, it could be done better. He is not proud. He will step down and he always does it. So when people are protesting against somebody who is already doing what it is supposed to do, then it is like you want to fix something that is been fixed. It has already been broken before, but now he is working towards fixing it. The first book I wrote is called Realistic Hopes. I wrote that book 11 years ago. And the reason why I named it Realistic Hope is that I realised even back then that what makes people fail in life is that their hopes are never realistic. If you want to succeed, you have to have realistic hopes. This man came to a government and so much has happened. Terrible things have happened in Nigeria.

But it's the same government of APC?

But when you say the same government as APC, government is government. Whether it is APC or PDP. You people remember what happened before the election. There was no petrol, and there was the issue of the naira redesign and all of the conspiracies so that he wouldn't become president. So let us take a step back. One year and two months is not a long period.

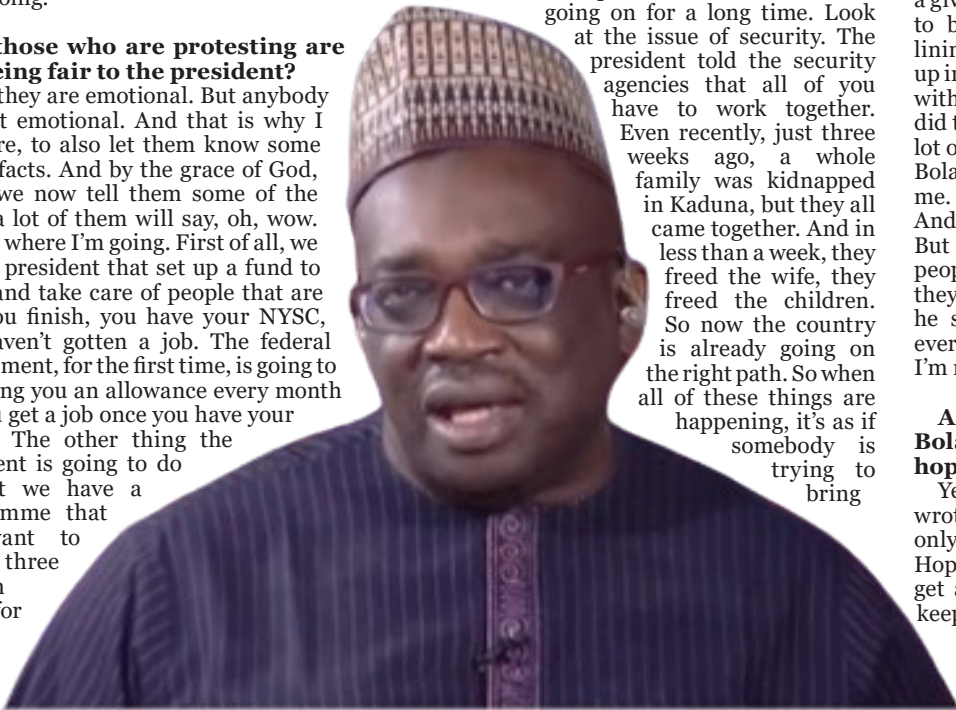
So when do you think people should

have gone to protest if the president wasn't performing?

First of all, people have a right to protest. It is in the constitution. But what I want people to do as well is to take a look at what the president has been doing.

Is it the fault of the people that they've not seen? Is it that the government is not communicating enough? What do you think is the problem?

Whether it is the fault of the people. What has happened has happened. And now we are here to let people know that this president that you are looking at has a lot of wonderful plans for Nigeria. Look at this new Ministry of Livestock. You know what it's going to do? Do you know what the Livestock Ministry has done in Brazil? Do you know how that is enough to even transform Nigeria? The president is trying to solve this cattle, farmers problem that has been going on for a long time. Look at the issue of security. The president told the security agencies that all of you have to work together. Even recently, just three weeks ago, a whole family was kidnapped in Kaduna, but they all came together. And in less than a week, they freed the wife, they freed the children. So now the country is already going on the right path. So when all of these things are happening, it's as if somebody is trying to bring



God back. It's like the people of Israel when the Jews left, and now somebody wants to take them back to Egypt. You know, this should not happen.

Do you think for a moment, maybe there are conspiracies against President Tinubu?

The truth of the matter is that there were always fears from the beginning, that if this protest starts, some people might hijack it. And some people, unfortunately, haven't gotten over the fact that God did not promise that they will win last year's election. So at the end of the day, some of these people, I'm not accusing him. I don't know him. I don't know what his mind is. Nobody has the right to accuse anybody. But some people are very unsincere. The same people who worked against my dad and canceled his election, do you think they are going to want the person who was trying his best to support my dad to ever become president and to succeed? It is the same forces that we have. But by the grace of God, I believe in God. And I believe that whatever it is that is happening, a lot of people will come to realise that this is wrong. This man has so many things he has done. I just mentioned so many things. I can talk about it all day. This is what we do in the office, even me on my level. I have just signed an agreement with the NDLEA (Nigeria Drug Law Enforcement Agency). We have come up with the Renewed Hope Resilience Initiative. We are starting with 50 former drug addicts who were rehabilitated by NDLEA. We are going to rehabilitate them in vocational training. We have so many plans in a supply chain. These are the same people who would have been drug addicts and gotten involved in

banditry and kidnapping. This government has wonderful plans. So Nigerians shouldn't be deceived and shouldn't be fooled.

So you are asking Nigerians to give this government a chance?

They should give the government a chance. And the reason why they should have realistic hopes is they should know that this government came at a time. Even the election is enough to tell Nigerians everything.

Your father ran to be the president of this country in one of the elections, regarded or tagged as one of the freest and fairest in this country. Do you see Bola Tinubu in an MKO Abiola for some reason?

Well, I will tell you one thing. At the end of the day, everybody is different. But if you look at his attitude, if you go to his house on a given day, he didn't even know he was going to become president. You will see people lining up the same way you see them lining up in my dad's house. A lot of people I meet up with today, tell me stuff like, Oh, your father did this for me. Your father did that for me. A lot of people I meet, tell me that, Oh, Senator Bola Tinubu did this for me. He did that for me. I see these similarities in those areas. And of course, they are both accountants. But I also see a conspiracy as like, the same people that didn't want my father to succeed, they also don't want him to succeed because he supported my dad and he almost lost everything. But that is my personal opinion. I'm not forcing my opinion on anybody.

And your father preached hope and Bola Tinubu too is also preaching hope.

Yeah, preaching hope. In the first book I wrote, I called it Realistic Hope. Hope is the only thing. Even Barack Obama, Audacity of Hope, you know. Without hope, you cannot get anywhere. And there is no way we can keep having hope if we see people going out.

But when the hope looks like a dashed one and people think that what they wanted, they are not getting it. You don't think that that would be a problem?

I will tell you what is so funny. When I was a kid, there was a hospital near my house. They take me there, whenever I have malaria and they give me an injection. Knowing this I would just run away. And they will drag me back. I would run away again. Then they would finally hold me and give me the injection. After two days of pain, I will now be happy because I will be playing around. I would have recovered. So sometimes for you to get better, it has to get tough. It is a test and it is from God. But you see, God is testing people and it is not just in Nigeria, in America.

Are you saying there is a hand of God in all of this?

There's a hand of God in everything. Even in the United States.

In which part is the hand of God? Is it in the hardship or the president coming into power?

Everything. Anything you go through. The president coming into power was divine. Even in the United States, the highest level of inflation in the United States is this year, it has never happened like that in the US before. The whole world is like, I don't know what's going on. I think God is testing us, you know. And I'll tell you this, we have to pass the test. When I see people looting and all of that, all in the name of protest, I say to myself that the person you are looking for, you don't know what he has gone through to even open the shop.

Interview

"I want to tell the government that we are not mad. Our members are not mad. We are not strike-mongers. All these strikes and protests are most of the time propelled by the power that be and it is not good for us."

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Threatening youth not solution to protest – Organisers

Director of Mobilisation, Take It Back Movement, Damilare Ademola, speaks on the protest, among other issues with Seun Okinbaloye, OLUMIDE OLUSEGUN brings excerpts

You and your friends started this whole protest and the question will be, have you achieved the objectives that you set out in the first place?

Well, I will like to address your question by saying that myself and my friends didn't start this whole thing. I have said it again and again that this is the idea of hungry Nigerians. This is the idea of deprived Nigerians. This is the idea of economically marginalised Nigerians. And for the question of objectives, the protesters, which I am part of, are yet to achieve the objective of our protests, which are stated in our Charter of Demands. But one thing we have been able to do is to make a strong statement and to send a strong message to the people in power, to see the capacity of what the masses, what people can do by way of protest, to see what the people are capable of if they are about



to express their displeasure. That was kick-started and it's ongoing and we are waiting on the government to respond to us and address our demands. And until then, the protest continues.

From your own point of view, it does look like there is only one thing that you have achieved in this protest and which is the fact that you have awoken some kind of consciousness in the Nigerian people and you have gotten the attention of government. Is that all that you have achieved?

Well, I think we've been able to, you know, make people see that they have the power to hold government accountable. And we have also made the government to come to the consciousness that governance or government is meant for the interest of the people. And once the people are unable to benefit from your governance, then there is no sense for the continuation of such a government.

Are you being sponsored by any politician?

Well, I think that's, for me is a ridiculous way to denigrate the genuine agitation.

I am asking a direct question. There are direct allegations that the protests, in some ways, are being sponsored by politicians.

So I will like you to be able to open up to Nigerians to let them know that this is being sponsored in part or in whole by some politicians.

Is it true?

For me, the sponsor of this protest, I have said and I will say again, is hunger. It is economic inequality, economic deprivation of a larger percentage of the Nigerian people. Anything short of that should not be considered. What we should be considering is that do people have a genuine reason to take over the street, to express their displeasure? Are people really hungry? I walked the town of the states today while protesting and I saw the Mongols queues at the filling stations and I was appalled. These are reasons why people are poured on the streets across the nation protesting there's unavailability of PMS. Look at everywhere in the country, there's darkness. Look at everywhere in the country, it's high cost of living. Everywhere in the country, transportation costs are surged. You know, people are not living a good life.

You had the FCT minister who says there is a lawmaker, who is behind all of these. Is anybody buying you water, logistic money from all of these? Are you getting any kind of support?

The people themselves, in their benevolence, the people protesting in those who have done, some are the ones who provide for the less privileged at the protest ground. I don't think you should expect more from the minister of the FCT, Mr Wike, than mischief because I think they have assessed the whole condition and that's their only way to bail themselves out by beginning to make mischievous comments, trying to beat around bush rather than address the main issue. They are finding all means to denigrate the genuine agitation of the Nigerian people, rather than sitting down, inviting the people, rather than coming on the streets

to speak with the Nigerian people. If these people in power, if they are really interested in the social welfare of the people, by now the president ought to have come to the Abuja streets to address the young people who are genuinely agitating and rather what we have been seeing are reckless statements flying up and down. We saw one this afternoon from the chief of army staff who was subtly threatening Nigerian youths. We have seen several states in the country imposing curfew. These for us are insensitive approaches.

Mr Ebun Adegboruwa, who is your lawyer has advised that the protest should be called off after today. Are ignoring that?

Ebun Adegboruwa is not our lawyer and he doesn't speak for us.

But he wrote on behalf of Take It Back movement to the IGP?

Yes, he might have presented himself as a solicitor but he is not hungry, obviously.

Have you sacked him?

He is a senior advocate. Mr Ebun is a Senior Advocate of Nigeria who lives well. He is not as hungry as common people who are taking over.

So you don't yield to that plea that you should call it off today?

No. Are you stopping the protest tomorrow (August 3)?

No.

Are you going ahead?

The protest initially was slated for ten days. And like we said, it was slated for ten days but may go beyond, depending on the response we get from the government. But it doesn't seem that we are dealing with a responsible government. So the government should expect it to go beyond ten days if our demands.

NEWSXtra

Olubadan-in-line Traditional Chiefs Harp On Development

By Olumide Olusegun

The modern palace of the Olubadan of Ibadanland was the site of a momentous event on Sunday, August 11, 2024, as the Olubadan-in-line Traditional Chiefs held their inaugural meeting.

This historic gathering brought together thirty-four chiefs from the Olubadan succession line, marking the first time in Ibadanland's rich history that such a comprehensive assembly had taken place.

The meeting, which is seen as a landmark event in the history of Ibadanland, aimed to foster unity and strengthen the bonds among the chiefs, thereby ensuring their unwavering support for the Olubadan-in-Council and His Imperial Majesty, the Olubadan of Ibadanland.

Speaking to the press after the meeting, Chief Monsur Abiola Arulogun, the Bada

Balogun of Ibadanland and the acting Public Relations Officer of the association, highlighted the significance of the event.

He emphasised that the primary objective of the meeting was to advance the development of Ibadanland.

"This is the first time in history that the Olubadan-in-line Traditional Chiefs have come together to form an alliance for the sole purpose of enhancing the unity and development of our beloved Ibadanland," Chief Arulogun stated.

The newly formed association of the Olubadan-in-line Traditional Chiefs is seen as a crucial step towards ensuring the continued progress and prosperity of Ibadanland.

The chiefs are committed to working closely with the Olubadan-in-Council, providing the necessary support and counsel to

His Imperial Majesty, the Olubadan of Ibadanland.

In the traditional hierarchy of Ibadan, ascending to the prestigious throne of the Olubadan is a journey that begins with the appointment as a Mogaji, the head of a family compound. From there, an individual is elevated through various ranks within either the civil or military lines, known respectively as the Olubadan line and the Balogun line. Each of these lines consists of seventeen positions that must be ascended before one can join the Olubadan-in-Council, the governing body of Ibadanland.

For the civil line (Olubadan line), the ascension order includes the following positions: Jagun, Ajia, Bada, Aare Onibon, Gbonkan, Aare Egbeomo, Oota, Laguna, Aare Ago, Ayingun, Asaju, Ikolaba, Aare Alasa, Agbaakin, Ekefa,

Maye, and Abese.

Upon completing the Abese stage, the chief is promoted to: Ekaarun Olubadan, Ekerin Olubadan, Ashipa Olubadan, Osi Olubadan and Otun Olubadan.

Similarly, for the military line (Balogun line), the ascension order includes: Ekaarun Balogun, Ekerin Balogun, Ashipa Balogun, Osi Balogun, Otun Balogun and Balogun.

After successfully ascending these ranks, an individual becomes eligible for the Olubadan stool, the highest traditional title in Ibadanland.

The historic meeting at the Olubadan palace signals a renewed commitment to the unity and development of Ibadanland.

The Olubadan-in-line Traditional Chiefs have pledged to play a pivotal role

in this effort, ensuring that their collective wisdom and experience are harnessed for the benefit of the entire community.

Chief Monsur Abiola Arulogun underscored the importance of this unity, stating that it is crucial for the ongoing progress and prosperity of Ibadanland. He noted that the chiefs' alliance would not only strengthen the traditional institution but also enhance the cultural and social fabric of Ibadanland.

During the meeting, the Olubadan-in-line Traditional Chiefs also took a moment to commiserate with Snr Chief Akinade Fijabi on the recent loss of his mother. The chiefs expressed their heartfelt condolences and prayed for the peaceful repose of the departed soul.

The inaugural meeting was graced by several

notable chiefs from both the civil and military lines of the Olubadan succession. Among the distinguished attendees were: Snr Chief Saka Lapade, Aare Alasa Olubadan; Snr Chief Hamzat Eleruweere, Aare Alasa Balogun; Snr Chief Lowo Obisesan, Asaju Balogun; Chief Babajide Ayoade, Laguna Balogun; Chief Taofeek Ogunwale, Gbonka Olubadan; Chief Wasii Aladorin, Aare Onibon Olubadan; Chief Taofeek Adegoke, Aare Onibon Balogun; Chief Abiola Arulogun, Bada Balogun; Chief Abiola Iyiola, Ajia Olubadan; Chief Taiwo Akande, Ajia Balogun; and Chief Remi Babalola, Jagun Balogun

The formation of the Olubadan-in-line Traditional Chiefs' association is a significant development in the history of Ibadanland.

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One day, you will leave that office. What do you want Nigerians to remember you for? What will the Tinubu legacy be? This is a golden opportunity that you have. Nobody is coming to Aso Rock to remove you.



Tinubu Should Reduce Ministers to 37 – Lawyer Inibehe

Human Rights Lawyer, Inibehe Effiong speaks to Seun Okinbaloye on the controversy surrounding the protest, among other issues, LILIAN EDWARD brings excerpts.

What is your assessment of the success of this protest?

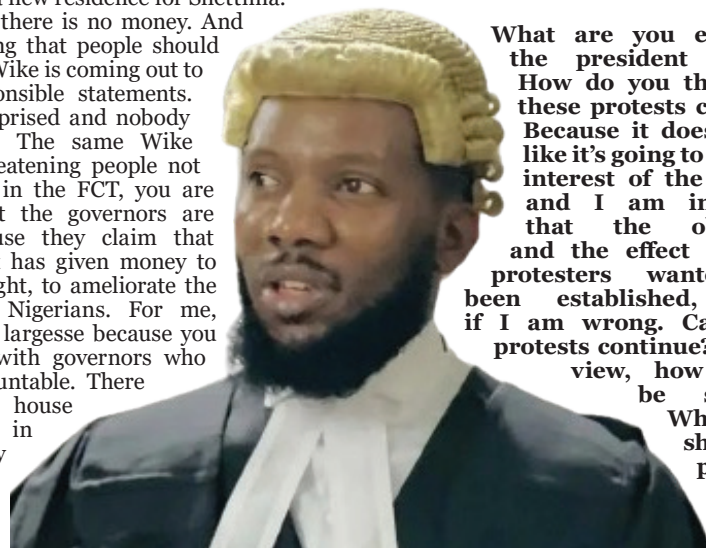
Well, ordinarily, I would have just gone straight to answer your question. But I would like to respond to a few things Mr Jamiu Abiola has said and to remind Nigerians that in 2019, Mr. Jamiu Abiola told Nigerians that the then Buhari represented the vision of his father. And in fact, he told Nigerians in 2019 to vote for Buhari to honour his father. In 2020, you can fact-check me on this, Jamiu Abiola, who is praising Tinubu today, told Nigerians that Buhari had the same vision as his father. When Buhari left in 2023, thousands of Nigerians were slaughtered. The economy was nothing to write home about. The so-called war against corruption was a complete flock. The entire country was in ruins. Tinubu came in and even he said that he made Nigeria. At least people loyal to him are saying so. So I begin to wonder whether Buhari's legacy represents the vision of Abiola for Nigeria. I think that is a question Mr. Jamiu and his family should think about because when he is speaking in this manner, it is a discretion of the name of his father. And I am saying that because I am very upset about some of the things he has said. Now, regarding your question, I think Nigerians should no longer be taken for granted. We cannot continue to live in a country where we have leaders who do not listen to what the people are saying. People claim, oh, that the president is doing this and the president is listening. Mr Seun, this protest has lasted for two days now, has President Tinubu spoken to Nigerians? (As at the time this interview was conducted.) I don't want him to address Nigerians. I want him to address the demands of Nigerians. It is not the same thing. But has he even addressed Nigerians? 48 hours after, dozens of over 12 Nigerians have been killed at a minimum. Has the president spoken? Has the government even said, okay, we want to talk? These are our representatives in the dialogue. Because people kept saying, protesters should talk to the government. They said the protesters are faceless, they are leaderless. Who are the people who represent the face of the government if the conversation or dialogue is to take place? And what are the demands of the protesters? Because you say people should leave the streets, but have you listened to them? Have you listened to them? You have a president that has 48 ministers, the highest in the history of our country, at a time when the country does not have money to run and pay for basic services. If the president is serious, it shouldn't take him one hour to reduce the number of ministers to 37 because constitutionally, every state is entitled to a minister plus the FCT. There is no reason why Nigeria should have more than 37 ministers. So when the protesters say they need you to reduce the cost of governance, these are actions that can be taken under 24 hours. People say they want electoral reform. You saw how the Akpabio Senate and the counterpart in the House of Reps convened to amend the Police Act to extend the tenure of the IG within 24 hours. Under a 24-hour emergency session, they also passed an appropriation act. If the president is serious about addressing the protesters, by now the Federal Ministry of Justice would have come up with a draft bill to amend the electoral act and send it to the National Assembly to make electronic transmission of results mandatory under our law. This is one of the demands. If the president is serious, he would have addressed other demands of the protesters, including economic policies that have been introduced that have rendered Nigerians homeless and rendered Nigerians hungry. They told us on the 29th of May last year, that the president had removed subsidy. We are aware from records that last year, you can fact check me, about three trillion was paid for subsidy. Where is the fuel? We are still having

queues. People cannot find it to buy. They have increased the cost of the electricity tariff which has now made a mess of power in our country. So you continue to introduce policies that are subjugating people. And people are protesting. You haven't said anything to address it. You want to buy a new aircraft. You are building a new residence for Shettima. And you say there is no money. And you are saying that people should listen. Now, Wike is coming out to make irresponsible statements. I am not surprised and nobody is surprised. The same Wike that was threatening people not to come out in the FCT, you are hearing what the governors are saying because they claim that the president has given money to governors, right, to ameliorate the suffering of Nigerians. For me, that is just a largesse because you are dealing with governors who are not accountable. There is no single house of assembly in Nigeria today out of the 36, not one, not in Lagos, not in Akwa Ibom or Zamfara that can hold a governor accountable, not even one. All of them have become stooges of governors. Are you not aware that governors are still spending billions monthly as running costs to buy new vehicles, to run their government houses, on frivolous things? We are dealing with a kleptomaniac political class in our country. We are dealing with people who have made up their minds to destroy our country. So how can the president be giving money to governors that nobody can hold accountable? And they claim they are distributing rice. How many rice, and how many families have received this rice? How many? They claim that they are going to reduce the cost of a bag of rice to 40,000. Maybe in the villa, they are selling it at that amount. In the markets in Lagos, I haven't seen that. So maybe it's in the Akpabio Senate that they are selling rice for N40,000. I have not seen it anywhere. So the point I am making is if you are honest about engagement with the protesters because it's not enough to say you want to engage. Are you honest about it? Are you honest about it? I am excited that in Lagos, the situation is relatively calm. And that is because, at our level, we are also talking, advising the protesters to be calm. But guess what? Even as I speak to you, today we just secured the release of 12 people from Panti. The governor said it is peaceful. The CP said it was peaceful. People are still being arrested. In Calabar, protesters were arrested. So you have provocation all over the country. And the military is even issuing a statement to threaten Nigerians. So which one should we take? If the government is interested in dialogue, government thugs are attacking protesters all over the country. If you are interested in dialogue, who do you want the protesters to talk to? And which of the demands are you willing to make? What concession has Tinubu made so far? None

Although Damilare has said that they fired Mr Ebun Adegboruwa as their lawyer, he has advised that the protest should be called off. Earlier on, I spoke with Mr. Paul Alaje, who says there are dire implications of the protest on our economy. In your view, should we continue with these protests because of the implications on our lives? We are running a very tender economy that cannot afford non-productivity any longer. What is your view?

The problem with the economy, in my view, is not the fact that businesses have been

impacted in the last two days. The problem with the economy is that, as I said, we have a kleptomaniac, a criminal political class in our country that has subjugated the economy. Because before people went on protest, was the economy saving the interests of the Nigerian people? So, whether the protest should continue or not, it is in the hands of Mr President. All these irresponsible comments go off, can you imagine them saying that it is those who lost the election that are responsible for the protest?



What are you expecting the president to do? How do you think that these protests can stop? Because it doesn't look like it's going to be in the interest of the country and I am imagining that the objectives and the effect that the protesters wanted has been established, except if I am wrong. Can these protests continue? In your view, how can it be stopped? What should the president do?

Very simple. Today (August

2), I want to hear Mr Tinubu announce to Nigerians that he has reduced the number of his ministers to 37. I want to hear Tinubu announce that the cost of governance, the cost of running the presidency has been cut by at least 50%. I want to hear the National Assembly and the president announce that the running cost of the National Assembly has been reduced by 50%. I want to hear Tinubu announce that the cost of fuel has been reduced, the electricity tariff has been reduced, and a bill has been sent to the National Assembly to make electronic transmission of results mandatory. I want to hear Tinubu announce that the recommendations of the ENDSARS panel have been implemented. Since 2020, nobody has been held accountable for the killings at the toll gates. People are still in detention. So you cannot say people should leave the streets and you are provoking. Because they keep asking who is provoking, and what is leading to the protests. Apart from Anger, those who are sponsoring these protests are people in government who are making irresponsible statements. If the Tinubu government is serious, some things can be done within 24 hours. How can our National Assembly members be receiving hardship allowance when Nigerians are barely looking for what to eat? Let all these things be abolished. Abolish the office of the first lady. Abolish the office of the first son. Abolish the office of the first daughter. Nigerians will know that you are serious. They are not willing to do that.

But Mr. Effiong, like one of the questions Mr Jamiu Abiola was raising earlier, that it's too early in the day to blame President Bola Tinubu for some of the rot that has been in this government that he's trying to fix. Is it possible, for example, that the promoters of the protest and some Nigerians will give Bola Tinubu a chance to maybe a bit more time, maybe when it's after two years, to see the benefit of the effort and the actions of his government? Is it possible?

I think these questions, with profound respect, are questions that answer themselves. The question of time, as far as I am concerned, is irrelevant. Tinubu was the leader of the APC because they kept saying he made a rot. Who brought Nigeria to its knees? Buhari? Tinubu brought Buhari to power. At least he has said so publicly by himself. So he said Buhari's policies were his policies. He endorsed his policies.

And if Buhari had destroyed the country, how many people in Buhari's government has Tinubu's government arrested? Has the EFCC arrested? How many former governors have been put on trial? Where is Yahya Bello? We are still looking for him. So they should stop saying that they made the country destroyed. The people who are serving in Tinubu's government today played a role in Buhari's government. The chief of staff to the president was the speaker under Buhari. I can give you several examples. So this attempt to distance Tinubu from Buhari is simply an insult to Nigerians. If this president is serious, I have told you demonstrable actions that he can implement in 24 hours and people will leave the streets. Nobody wants to protest for the fun of it. They are not doing that. They keep saying we made Nigeria destroyed. It was APC that destroyed Nigeria and I am happy they have admitted to it, but they must now repay the damage that they have done to this country because they told us they were going to bring change. Look at where we are. Our new national minimum wage cannot buy a bag of rice. Is that not a scandal in the most populous nation, one of the largest oil-producing countries? And some governors are even saying they cannot implement it. And these are the same people he is giving pocket money to. How can Tinubu be giving pocket money to governors? Governors that cannot be held accountable, governors that have destroyed local government. What an irony. Tinubu attorney general goes to court to say governors should stop stealing or diverting local government money. The same Tinubu is giving money to the same governors. Does that sound like a serious administration that is listening to Nigerians? So the point I am making is that stop demonising the protest. Pull out the military from the streets. Section 218 of our constitution is clear. The military is meant to protect the territorial integrity of our country and can only be called in aid of civil authorities when they are overwhelmed. The police are not overwhelmed. The IG cannot tell us that he's overwhelmed. Stop the killing of protesters. Begin to address their demands. People will naturally leave the streets. I have told you things they can do before tomorrow morning. The question is, will they do it?

What would be your final thought tonight on the programme going forward?

My final thought is that he (Inibehe Effiong) was very emotional and it's not the way to go about it. We are trying to resolve issues, not get emotional and get angry. This is something that can be resolved. This is the rule of law country. We have a president who was elected for four years. And there are some hardships. And he (President Tinubu) has said it over and over again. And as I told you before, there are a lot of palliative measures he has done. I mentioned to you the youth empowerment scheme. I mentioned to you the three million jobs for the youth, which are like technical jobs. I also mentioned to you the strategic reserve, like 40,000, you know, for the 2,000 grains of rice. And a lot of things, these things take time. So please, we should be patient and we shouldn't get insensitive and we shouldn't get emotional. It is not going to help matters.

What's your final thought? What is the way forward?

You (Tinubu) said that this is your turn. Was it your turn to redeem Nigeria or to further destroy Nigeria? When you go to bed this night, if you are listening to me, please answer that question. One day, you will leave that office. What do you want Nigerians to remember you for? What will the Tinubu legacy be? This is a golden opportunity that you have. Nobody is coming to Aso Rock to remove you. I have not heard that as part of the demands of the protesters. But you have a unique opportunity in history to reset this country for the better. Stop listening to sycophants. Stop listening to those who are cheering you on. The country is on its knees. Reverse course. Stop these wastages and change the face of our country and posterity will remember you. But if you don't do this, history will judge you very harshly. That is what I can say.

CAMPUSFocus

“The appointees do not get paid on my end but that of the Federal Government get paid. He (Tinubu) has the prerogative to settle his supporters in many dimensions other than appointment but for student unionism, that is not the case.”



15

I want to become Cross River’s First Female Governor – Unical SUG President

First Female President of the University of Calabar Student Union Government, Blessing Alims speaks with OLUMIDE OLUSEGUN on her career, the decision to appoint 50 students as aides, student loans, among other issues.

Can you tell us about yourself and your background?

I am Blessing Alims. a 300-level student of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Calabar, I am from the Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State. I am a Christian. I have been a volunteer with NGOs. I engage in a lot of social impact projects for the humanitarian good. I do this by collaborating with individuals who share my vision and mission as well.

How has been your journey of emerging as the first female president in the history of the UNICAL SUG?

My journey was not smooth. I skilled through because it was something I had decided to do. So, against all odds, I kept my head up high and pursued my set aspirations. I chose to lead with the desire to always impact and make a difference wherever I find myself. I have always been passionate about service to humanity in whatever I am doing. So, getting to be a SUG president gives me more opportunity to be responsible and work towards ensuring the welfare of the students is adequately catered for. This new role allows me to influence the decision-making process that will benefit the students as far as the institution is concerned.

What were some of the challenges you faced when vying for this position?

Firstly, I had a financial challenge. It was because I didn't have a political sponsor or godfather, as the case may be. That was what I faced severely. I know of a contestant who had an affiliation with government officials. Also, people would put it on your face that you are a woman and you cannot do it. And I am not on the fat side. I am on the slim side, so you can imagine what people would say. 'Oh, is this who wants to lead us?'

How were able to come out of the financial challenges that you eventually won the election?

I had good friends and well-wishers. If I needed one million to do a campaign, I had to break it down to see how I could get 50 people to give me N20,000. So, I decided to go back to my little network, my little group of friends.

How much did it cost you to run your campaign and eventually contest for the position?

I know I was advised to keep records, but I didn't want to break my heart, in case the game didn't come out well. But approximately, I spent over a million.

And how did you handle the criticism that you are a woman and you may not be able to lead?

I didn't just allow what they were saying to get over me. I know I have the qualities to lead. So those words fell on deaf ears. I just concentrate on what I want to do. Also, it is all about self-confidence. So I concentrated on the right strategies for the election.

What are the strategies?

I did my campaign well. I targeted the students at the hostels. I did what I could do and then I had a name for myself, which was V.O.B, that's Voice of Blessing. And I had to work with the team in sharing my posts on platforms. My media team was fully engaged in publicising all I had been doing on and off campus. So that was one thing that made me stand out differently among other contestants that were doing things within the university for the first time. I had a trademark of what I had done.

The issue of the involvement of women in politics has continued to be a public discussion, do you intend to take your political career after academics to normal politics in the outside world?

Yes, I do. I am just waiting to be the first female

governor of Cross River State. Well, that will start from somewhere and it has started.

What are you doing to achieve this aspiration?

I will be graduating next year and I will also be out of the office by next year. After that, I know I have built some structures with some organisations supporting women in politics. With such structures and the structure you will build, you will start by vying for your immediate constituency to see how that goes. If it doesn't go that way, you are lucky. You get appointed by the government to serve in a certain capacity that projects you into your aspiration. Everything is about a platform, a platform to build, a platform to explore and to grow.

What is your take on the current level of women's participation in politics?

I would say that the women are trying, despite all the difficulties. They have been projecting themselves and getting to where they want. But it is not enough. We need more seats. And just as my mentor would always say, that if you are given a position to lead as a woman, give other women the reason to also lead. Do not kill the dreams of other women. I got a call from someone in the University of Jos, that there is a female also wanting to run. So my emergence is not just for me but for many others. If we have women coming out to vote for certain offices it is good and should be encouraged.

Looking at your recent activity as President of the Student Union, you appointed 50 students as your aides. What informed your decision?

When we talk about appointments of aides, I don't know the idea that people have. Is it based on the monetary value they get or what? We should also

know that this is unionism. And while vying for certain positions, you have students who have sacrificed their time in lectures just to pursue your course and see how they contribute their little quarter to your emergence. And in unionism, there is no amount spelled out to pay appointees. It is conventional. It has been there. And what informs someone's decision to appoint aides are simply those who have worked for you. It showed that you were not alone. You had supporters. You had people who were piloting your course. The University of Calabar has over 30,000 students. And as a president, do you function well by just appointing five persons? How sure are you that you are going to get across to all faculties? Looking at the appointment list, you can see we have liaison officers. The liaison officers are representatives of faculties in the government. And then going back, you see the core appointees are about 37 or thereabouts. These people are an organised set of students offering voluntary service, not in exchange for any monetary value. And in that process, they are building their skills as well. So it's an opportunity for people to learn.

So what would be your message to your critics who are saying this will cost a lot of expenditures within the government and this may even cost an extra cost of governance?

It doesn't cost any extra cost of governance because it is not spelled out constitutionally that you should pay appointees. But it has given that liberty to us as student union leaders to appoint people who will help us in carrying out our responsibilities. For instance, as we speak, I am not in school to supervise what is happening there but I have appointees that are there.

And it feels as if I am there and they give feedback to me on what is happening. So, you are not paying them. Organized set of individuals carrying out voluntary service.

As you have said, you appointed the 50 students as aides as a way of rewarding those who had supported you for the emergence which some have said is a replica of what President Bola Tinubu did and was criticised for. How will you react to that?

Well, we are talking about two scenarios. We are talking about President Tinubu who is in control of trillions and those appointees get paid. And on the other hand, we are looking at students who are not with their parents, living in their comfort zone to ensure that these are done. So, these are two

scenarios. The appointees do not get paid on my end. The appointees of the Federal Government get paid. So, he (Tinubu) has the prerogative to settle his supporters in many dimensions other than appointment but for student unionism, that is not the case. Those are two different things that should be understood clearly.

Some have said to become a Student Union Government President, You must belong to a cult. Which cult group do you belong to before you could emerge as President?

I don't belong to anyone. I have always been a focused student. I focus on my books, home, church activities, and my work. So, I didn't join any of those associations. I had mentioned earlier that one of the challenges I had was not having a godfather. So, someone who is in a cult or belongs to some certain association or organisation will not have that particular challenge.

Do you at any point during the process of contesting for the position face the challenge of one cult group or the other threatening you?

Not at all. One thing in leadership is that you need to recognise certain groups exist and when they exist, you pay reference to them, not because you belong. The Bible says, give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. So, for you to have a smooth administration or to have a smooth election process, just as we do what is called consultation, if you have certain groups of persons that are identified to be this and that, it is pertinent that you consult them and not make them feel that they are segregated. In so doing, nobody comes to harass you or pressure you.

So, are there cult groups in Unical?

Well, I don't know how to respond to your question, but there are associations in Unical. You cannot take touts out of the existence of a particular place. So, whether they are called cult groups or they are called whatever, I am not interested. But if you want to find out if there are cult groups in the University of Calabar, you can come down and find out.

One of the challenges of unionism is hooliganism, crisis, violence, and fighting which is one issue that has always occurred when NANS and other unions are conducting elections. What is your take on this?

Yes, there is no peace without violence. So, for you to have peace, that means the atmosphere must have been distorted. So, when you are talking about the issues that have to do with NANS and others, it is now left for the NANS body to see how they put in place measures to ensure those crises or those problems do not arise.

The Federal Government initiated the student loan. What is your take and your reservations about it?

The student loan has the name student loan. Well, for my end, I am yet to see any student benefiting from it. So, until then, I will know if the student loan is for students. On the other hand, from the criteria or the mode of payment, it is not for an average Nigerian student whose parents do not earn up to \$500. If you go by the criteria and requirements to assess the student loan, then I would say it is for highly placed students whose parents are well-to-do and not for an average Nigerian student whose mother tried to make ends meet by menial jobs.

Are you saying that the loan is not designed for poor students?

Certainly.

What gives you that impression?

Have you gone through the requirements to assess the loan? Well, if you go through the requirements to assess the loan, then you will understand better why I am coming from this position.

What do you think the Federal Government should do in this regard?

The Federal Government has already set out its measures. If you want to give students loans, it is very simple. You will visit the universities and see how you will reduce the requirement in assessing this loan. But being that they already have their set

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The Legacy of Sir Louis Odumegwu Ojukwu: Nigeria's Pioneer Billionaire and Industrial Magnate

The first billionaire in Nigeria and West Africa was Sir Louis Phillip Odumegwu Ojukwu. He amassed wealth of \$14 billion in present-day value from palm oil exportation before diversifying into transportation, textiles, and other ventures.

He was also the founder of the Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE) and played a pivotal role in Nigeria's economic and political spheres.

Sir Louis Phillip Odumegwu Ojukwu, OBE, was born in 1909. He hailed from the Ojukwu family of Nwakanwa quarters, Obiuno Umudim Nnewi. Ojukwu's journey to prominence began with a solid educational foundation. He attended primary school in Asaba and later the Hope Waddell Training Institute. These formative years laid the groundwork for his remarkable career, which spanned various industries and significantly impacted Nigeria's economic landscape.

Ojukwu's professional journey started modestly at the Agricultural Department, but his ambition soon led him to join John Holt as a tyre sales clerk. His entrepreneurial spirit was evident even in those early days. To supplement his income, he incorporated a textile company in Onitsha.

However, it was his keen observation of the challenges faced by Eastern textile traders due to inadequate transportation that sparked his most significant venture. Recognising transportation as a critical need, Ojukwu established Ojukwu Transport Limited, the first major transport company to facilitate the movement of Easterners to Lagos from the Asaba end of the Niger River.

The economic boom following World War II provided fertile ground for Ojukwu's transport business to flourish. Collaborating with the West African Railway Company and the newly formed produce boards, Ojukwu offered his fleet for commodity transportation, significantly improving the trading environment for Nigerian traders. His transport company not only moved goods but also played a crucial role in the distribution network across Nigeria.

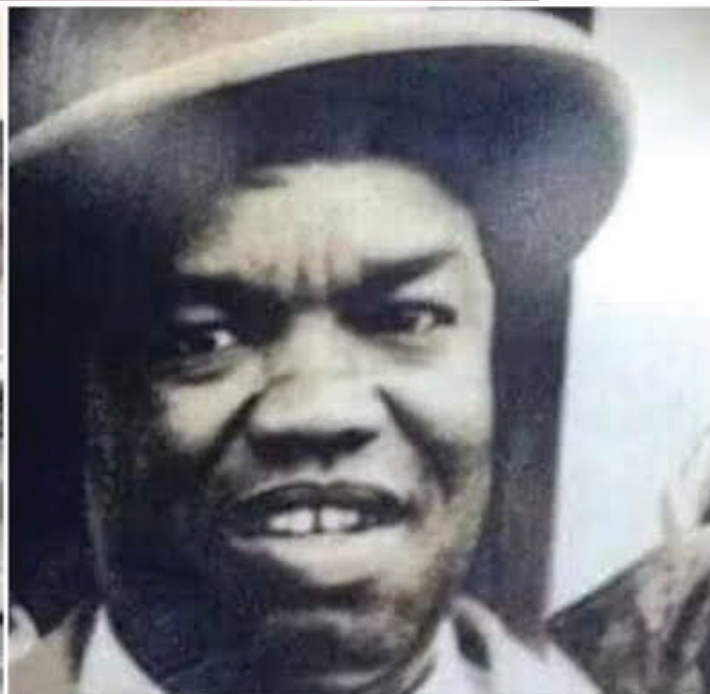
During the 1950s, Ojukwu diversified his business interests. He ventured into various industries, invested heavily in real estate, and secured directorship positions in numerous major corporations, including the state-owned Nigerian

National Shipping Line, Nigerian Cement Factory, Nigerian Coal Corporation, and Shell Oil Nigeria Limited. His business acumen and strategic investments cemented his reputation as a key player in Nigeria's economic development.

Ojukwu's influence extended beyond the business realm. He was instrumental in establishing several significant institutions in Nigeria. Notably, he was the founding president of the Nigerian Stock Exchange, a pivotal platform for the country's financial growth. Additionally, he served as the president of the African Continental Bank, further demonstrating his leadership in the financial sector.

His board memberships and chairmanships in some of Nigeria's most profitable companies, such as Guinness Nigeria

Ojukwu's success in business naturally led to his involvement in politics. He was an active member and donor to the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), a political party



Limited and John Holt plc, showcased his ability to steer organisations toward success. Ojukwu's business strategies and leadership were not confined to private enterprises; he also contributed to public corporations, exemplifying his commitment to Nigeria's overall economic progress.

"Ojukwu's influence extended beyond the business realm. He was instrumental in establishing several significant institutions in Nigeria. Notably, he was the founding president of the Nigerian Stock Exchange."

led by prominent figures like Nnamdi Azikiwe. His political career saw him win a parliamentary seat during Nigeria's First Republic, highlighting his influence in the country's political landscape.

In 1953, Ojukwu was appointed head of an NCNC peace committee, tasked with restoring peace in the regional House of

Assembly.

His approach to policy was characterised by a blend of capitalism and a moderate right-wing stance, distinguishing him from Azikiwe's socialist undertones. His contributions to political discourse were significant. He co-authored a report on the Economic Mission to Europe and North America with Azikiwe, recommending the investment of extra funds from the produce marketing board in regional banks and public corporations to stimulate economic development.

Ojukwu's contributions to Nigeria's economic and political spheres did not go unnoticed. Throughout World War II and the years following, his transport company played a crucial role in moving goods and supplies, including for the British during the war.

His services were highly valued, and in recognition of his efforts, he was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II. This honour underscored his impact and legacy as a distinguished Nigerian businessman and philanthropist.

Sir Louis Odumegwu Ojukwu's legacy extended through his family. His son, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, became a notable figure in Nigerian history as the military governor and later the leader of the secessionist state of Biafra during the Nigerian Civil War.

Sir Louis's entrepreneurial and political achievements laid a strong foundation for many on Nigeria's socio-political landscape.

Sir Louis Odumegwu Ojukwu passed away in September 1966, just a year before the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War. His death marked the end of an era for a man whose vision and leadership had a profound impact on Nigeria's development.

His contributions to the business world, his role in shaping the Nigerian Stock Exchange, and his active participation in politics

remain integral parts of his enduring legacy.

Sir Louis Odumegwu Ojukwu's life story is a testament to the power of vision, determination, and strategic thinking. From humble beginnings, he rose to become one of Nigeria's most influential business moguls, shaping the country's economic landscape through his various ventures.

His contributions to politics and his role in founding key financial institutions demonstrated his multifaceted influence. As Nigeria continues to evolve, the legacy of Sir Louis Odumegwu Ojukwu serves as an inspiration for future generations of entrepreneurs and leaders.
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"Nigerians do not expect the President to solve the nation's problems overnight, but we do expect a concerted effort to address the mismanagement of public resources, reduce the high cost of governance, and tackle issues like insecurity, corruption, electricity, agriculture."

Former Presidential Candidate of the Labour Party, Peter Obi in a statement posted on his X handle on Aug 5, 2024.



As we navigate through these temporary pains, please remember that every effort is being made to ensure a stable and prosperous future for all Nigerians. Our collective strength and unity will pave the way for a brighter tomorrow. We are in this together, and we will overcome.

President Bola Tinubu in a statement posted on his X handle on August 7, 2024.

OPINION

By Chrisite Doyin
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The Elite Disconnect: A Critique of Senate President Akpabio's Mockery of Hunger Protests

By Christie Doyin

In a recent and deeply troubling display of disconnection from the harsh realities faced by many Nigerians, Senate President Godswill Akpabio, just before the start of the planned peaceful protest, made an offhand remark about the upcoming hunger protests that shocked many. Akpabio's words, "We'll be eating, protesters can go protest," encapsulate not just an attitude of indifference but a blatant disdain for the very people he is supposed to serve.

This statement, delivered with an air of detachment and what seemed to be a mocking tone towards those suffering from the economic challenges facing the nation, raises serious questions about the empathy, or lack thereof, that is present among those in positions of power.

Nigeria is a nation currently grappling with widespread hardship, economic instability, and a growing sense of disenfranchisement among its citizens. The challenges facing the average Nigerian today are multifaceted, involving not just the economic but also the social and political spheres.

For many, basic survival has become a daily struggle, with inflation soaring, unemployment rates climbing, and essential services remaining inadequate. In this context, the Senate President's comment reflects an alarming disconnect between the governing elite and the populace, highlighting a systemic issue that has long plagued the Nigerian political landscape.

To fully grasp the gravity of Akpabio's words, one must consider the dire circumstances under which many Nigerians live.

The hunger protest, which began on Thursday, August 1st, is not just a random act of defiance; it is a cry for help from a populace that feels abandoned by its leaders. The protesters, driven to the streets by the soaring cost of living, unemployment, and a lack of necessities, were not seeking to disrupt the peace but to draw attention to their plights. Their demands are simple yet profound: they want to be heard, and they want action to be taken to alleviate their suffering.

In this context, Akpabio's remark is not only dismissive but also symbolic of a broader issue within the Nigerian political class, a failure to understand, or perhaps a refusal to acknowledge, the depth of the suffering among the people.

This is not an isolated incident, nor is it a new phenomenon. For years, Nigeria's political elite has been accused of being out of touch with the realities faced by ordinary Nigerians. This disconnection manifests in various ways, from the lavish lifestyles of those in power to the policies they enact, which often seem to prioritise the interests of the elite over the needs of the majority.

When a leader of Akpabio's stature dismisses such a serious issue with a flippant comment, it signals a dangerous erosion of the social contract between the government and the governed.

The social contract is the implicit agreement between a government and its people, where the government is expected to act in the best interests of the citizens, who in turn give their loyalty and obedience. Akpabio's remark suggests that those in power are more concerned with their comfort than with the welfare of the people they are supposed to represent. This is not just a political misstep; it

is a moral failing that strikes at the very heart of governance.

One cannot overlook the broader implications of this kind of attitude from a leader. Leadership, especially in times of crisis, is characterised by empathy, responsiveness, and a commitment to finding solutions.

Nigeria is currently facing multiple crises that include economic, social, and political challenges. It is in times like this that the character of its leaders is truly tested. Unfortunately, Akpabio's comment reveals a lack of the qualities that are most needed in these difficult times. Instead of mocking the protesters, Akpabio and his colleagues in the Senate should have engaged them, listened to their grievances, and worked towards addressing the underlying causes of their discontent.

The fact that the Senate President chose to make light of the situation rather than offer any constructive response speaks volumes about the priorities of those in power. It suggests a leadership that is more interested in preserving its privileges than in addressing the needs of the people. This is not just an issue of poor

leadership; it is a symptom of a broader crisis in Nigerian governance, where the interests of the elite often take precedence over the well-being of the majority.

Akpabio's comment is not an isolated incident; it is symptomatic of a broader problem within the Nigerian political system. For too long, the country's leaders have been insulated from the realities faced by ordinary Nigerians. This insulation has led to a culture of impunity, where the concerns of the populace are often ignored or, as in this case, mocked.

This culture of impunity is evident in the way many of Nigeria's leaders live their lives, far removed from the struggles of the average citizen.

They reside in well-guarded estates, send their children to schools abroad, and have access to the best healthcare. Meanwhile, the majority of Nigerians are left to fend for themselves in a country where basic services are often unavailable or inadequate. This growing divide between the rulers and the ruled is not only unsustainable; it is dangerous.

History has shown that when leaders become too detached from the realities of their people, it can lead to social unrest and, in some cases, revolution.

Nigeria is already seeing signs of this, with increasing protests, strikes, and a general sense of frustration among the populace. The hunger protests are just one manifestation of this growing discontent, and Akpabio's dismissive comment only serves to exacerbate the situation.

If Nigeria is to avoid further deterioration, there must be a renewed commitment to accountability on

the part of its leaders. Akpabio's comment should not be allowed to pass without scrutiny. The Senate President should be held accountable for his words, and he should be made to understand the gravity of the situation facing the country. Accountability, however, is not just about holding individual leaders responsible for their actions; it is also about

addressing the systemic issues that allow such behaviours to persist.

Nigeria's political system needs a fundamental overhaul, one that prioritises the needs and concerns of the people over the interests of the elite.

Empathy is a critical quality in leadership, especially in a nation as diverse and complex as Nigeria. Leaders must be able to put themselves in the shoes of the people they serve, understand their struggles, and respond in a way that is both compassionate and effective.

Akpabio's comment, however, suggests a complete lack of empathy, a dangerous trait in any leader. It is worth noting that empathy is not just about

feeling sorry for someone; it is about taking action to alleviate their suffering.

In this case, what is needed is a comprehensive approach to addressing the economic challenges facing the country. This includes not only short-term measures to alleviate hunger and poverty but also long-term strategies to create jobs, improve infrastructure, and ensure that all Nigerians have access to the necessities of life. A leader who understands the struggles of their people would be working tirelessly to implement such measures, rather than mocking those who are demanding them.

The dangers of a leadership that is disconnected from the realities of its people cannot be overstated. A government that fails to address the needs of its

citizens, or worse, mocks them, risks losing its legitimacy. When the people no longer believe that their leaders have their best interests at heart, the social contract begins to break down. This can lead to widespread disillusionment, protests, and in extreme cases, civil unrest.

Nigeria is no stranger to such unrest. The country has a long history of protests and uprisings, often driven by a sense of injustice and inequality. The EndSARS protests of 2020 are a recent example of how quickly discontent can spread when the government is perceived to be out of touch with the people.

What began as a movement against police brutality quickly evolved into a broader protest against the failures of the Nigerian state. The hunger protests, though focused on economic issues, have also ignited a similar wave of discontent.

In the face of such a blatant display of indifference from a senior government official, the role of the media and civil society becomes even more critical. The media must continue to highlight the plight of the protesters and the broader issues facing the country.

They must also hold leaders like Akpabio accountable for their words and actions. A free and independent press is essential in any democracy, and in Nigeria, it plays a crucial role in ensuring that the government remains answerable to the people.

Civil society, too, has a crucial role to play in this regard. By organising protests, raising awareness, and advocating for change, they can help to ensure that the voices of ordinary Nigerians are heard.

However, these efforts must be conducted peacefully and constructively, to avoid further exacerbating the already tense situation in the country. Violence and disorder will only serve to undermine the legitimate demands of the protesters and give the government an excuse to crack down on dissent.

Perhaps the most concerning aspect of Akpabio's comment is the complacency it reflects. The Senate President's remark suggests that he and others in the political elite believe that they can continue to govern without regard for the concerns of the people. This is a dangerous mindset, one that has led to the downfall of many leaders throughout history.

How Tearing, Mutilating Intl Passport may Lead to Jail

A viral video showing a woman publicly tearing her husband's passport at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport in Lagos has sparked widespread outrage. Many Nigerians on social media have condemned the act, calling for a thorough investigation and appropriate legal action.

A damaged passport can be as problematic as an expired one when it comes to international travel. Many countries, including Nigeria, have strict rules regarding damaged passports, and presenting a compromised document could result in denied entry or other legal consequences.

In Nigeria, the deliberate destruction or mutilation of a passport is a serious offense under the law. The Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) has launched a formal investigation into the incident, as the woman's actions may have violated Section 10(b) of the

Immigration Act 2015 (as amended).

This section addresses the unlawful alteration, tampering, or mutilation of any passport or its pages. The penalties for such actions are detailed under Section 10(h) of the Act, which include imprisonment for up to ten years, a fine of up to two million naira, or both.

The individuals involved in the incident are reportedly content creators with over 4,000 followers on TikTok, where they are known for producing prank videos. The NIS has identified and summoned the woman for further investigation. If found guilty, she could face severe legal repercussions.

In addition to passports, the mutilation or destruction of other national symbols, such as the Naira, is also punishable by law. Section 21 of the

Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Act specifically prohibits the abuse of Naira notes.

Furthermore, under Section 451 of the Criminal Code Act, any person who willfully and unlawfully destroys or damages any property is guilty of an offense.

This offense is generally classified as a misdemeanor, with a potential penalty of up to two years in prison. However, if the destroyed property is a document kept in a public office or evidence of title to land, the offense becomes a felony, carrying a penalty of up to seven years in prison.

A passport is considered the property of the Nigerian government, and its destruction is not taken lightly under the law. This incident serves as a reminder of the serious legal implications of such actions.

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