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THREATS TO DEMOCRACY, RULE OF LAW, BASIC FREEDOMS AND GROSS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA

On the 9th of December 2017, I was elected as the National Chairman of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), by virtue of which I became the official leader of the opposition in Nigeria. Prior to this, in 2015, our party's government led by President Goodluck Jonathan conducted a globally acclaimed free and fair presidential election and for the first time in our nation's history superintended a peaceful, democratic transition of power from a party in government to an opposition party, the All Progressive Congress (APC) - led by General Muhammadu Buhari (Rtd).

Our expectations had been that this government would work to strengthen or at least, sustain the gains of this democratic milestone.

Regrettably, the President Buhari led APC government is doing all it can to frustrate legitimate opposition and to intimidate and persecute our leaders and ultimately destroy the fragile fabrics of our burgeoning democracy. Our nation has become heavily polarized along dangerous fault lines where citizens now live in fear and mutual suspicion; where citizens are slaughtered by the day by marauders; where hunger and strange diseases ravage the people due to the insensitive and incoherent policies of this government.

I am constrained to bring to the attention of the United Nations what appears to be a predetermined and orchestrated plan by President Muhammadu Buhari and the Federal Government of Nigeria through various agencies including the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the Nigerian Armed Forces, the Nigerian Police and other security organisations to truncate Nigeria's democracy. The President and his administration are

desperate to retain power against the wishes of the Nigerian people who are groaning under the yoke of the misrule of the government in the last three years.

It is imperative to bring to the attention of the world, the various constitutional violations and the unrelenting persecution, arrest, detention and hurried trial of opposition members as well as perceived opponents of government, including innocent business concerns, apparently in pursuit of the grand plot to discredit and stifle the opposition in Nigeria.

There is also, the increasing unwarranted attacks by government controlled security forces on journalists, media houses and other well meaning Nigerians carrying out their legitimate duties simply because they hold different opinions from those of APC led government.

PERSECUTION AND INTIMIDATION OF OPPOSITION LEADERS

Since assumption of office in 2015, the President and the federal Government agencies have provided a blanket shield for its corrupt officials and for any member of the opposition who decamps to the ruling APC. This protective "immunity" is held firmly also for former state governors who misappropriated billions of state government funds to sponsor the 2015 presidential election most of whom were rewarded with 'juicy' ministerial portfolios by President Buhari.

Recently the federal government confirmed the persecution of opposition leaders in the guise of fighting corruption when it released a phantom list of alleged looters comprising only of persons who are members of the opposition PDP. Even persons who were facing criminal prosecution prior to the 2015 presidential elections who are now members of the ruling APC and other members of APC who are overtly known to be involved in known cases of corruption were excluded from the list whilst persons who have never been charged with any crime and who infact have not held any previous government portfolio including myself were listed as 'looters'.

All notable opposition leaders are being harassed or hounded by security operatives using all manners of frivolous and vexatious allegations. Today, despite our constitutionally guaranteed freedom of association and speech, Nigerians now live in fear of this intolerant, overbearing, bigoted and dictatorial administration seeking to foist a fascist regime on our country. How do we explain or justify the evil plan of the APC-led Federal Government to

monitor citizens' phone calls and social media communication purportedly to check for hate speeches without any enabling law?

The PDP is alerting the entire world of the increasing aggression and cruelty against opposition members and perceived opponents of government by the Federal Government, which is now using the apparatus of state power in their desperation to cow and subjugate opposition, suppress constitutionally guaranteed freedom of speech and association in our country. Today, there is thoughtless abuse of human rights in our country and the people now live in fear. Opposition members are now being arrested, manhandled and detained, with some of them having their family houses demolished for holding and expressing legitimate but divergent opinion even under a democracy.

Currently, our members and supporters in many states including Edo, Rivers Kaduna, Kogi, Borno, Adamawa, Delta and others are being hounded for expressing a divergent political opinion, particularly on the exposed corruption, abuses, constitutional violations and incompetence of the President Buhari administration.

In Kogi, Borno and Kaduna states, there are reports of the Government sponsoring agents to attack and destroy properties belonging to opposition members and supporters. The Governor of Kaduna state demolished a property belonging to an opposition member and perceived political opponent; the PDP secretariat in Borno state was demolished; whilst party's properties and those of supporters were destroyed by agents of government in Adamawa state.

Only few days ago, the federal government sent over a hundred heavily armed police and security personnel to abduct an unarmed serving Senator who is now lying critically ill at the National Hospital as a result of the injuries he sustained from the brutality of the police.

In Edo state, a serving Senator was attacked at the airport while disembarking from the aircraft. His offence was that he moved a motion on the floor of the Senate against a constitutional violation by President Buhari.

We decry this raging intimidation of our party officials, members and supporters and call on the United Nations and the International community to stand up and condemn this drift towards stone-age despotism. Nigeria is a democratic state and we reject any attempt by anybody to suppress the constitutionally guaranteed rights of the people, particularly, regarding the choice of how they should be governed.

STATE SPONSORED VIOLENCE AND MASS KILLINGS

What started a few years back as innocuous skirmishes between nomadic cattle rearers of Fulani extraction and farmers (on whose farmlands they trespassed) has now snowballed into a state sponsored killing spree across several states of the federation. Particularly in Benue, Enugu, Kogi, Taraba, Edo, Plateau, Nasarawa, Kaduna and Zamfara states. A retired general, former minister of defence and elder statesman, General Theophilus Y. Danjuma has openly accused the armed forces of Nigeria of colluding with the killer herdsmen and providing them cover to kill helpless and unarmed citizens.

On a daily basis, the nation is inundated with news of gruesome killings and unbating violence across the country, with Nigerians being hacked down or abducted by marauders and insurgents under the inept President Buhari's government which has failed to take decisive steps to stem the ugly tide. Despite persistent killings and wanton destruction of several communities, not even one person has been arrested or prosecuted by the Federal Government for these crimes against humanity.

There have been several allegations of the military and police authorities refusing to act on early warning information to prevent attacks on several communities in Benue and Taraba states. In some cases, the Police and the Army authorities withdrew their personnel just before attacks took place. The attacks on unarmed communities are unabated in several states and there has not been even a single clash or confrontation between the killers and the security forces.

The President did not openly condemn the attacks until more than a week after the killings and mass burial of more than 70 people in Benue state and did not visit any of the affected states until more than a month after initial attacks. It is very sad to note that in its insensitivity, the Federal Government did not consider it important to send a delegation to burial of those massacred in Benue indeed the President was rather in Kano state to attend the wedding of the daughter of the Kano state Governor, who is his confidant.

The Inspector-General of Police willfully refused to deploy policemen to the affected areas in Benue state mischievously categorizing the killings as fighting between herdsmen and farmers even when it was obvious that the farmers and residents of the sacked villages including women and children were unarmed. Indeed, such disposition is believed to be emboldening the marauders to continue their killing spree which is increasingly dividing our

ostensibly for the purchase of Tucano fighter aircrafts from the United States without appropriation by the National Assembly. The Nigerian Senate conducted a vigorous inquiry into the mindless diversion of N5billion meant for the IDPs under the Presidential initiative on the northeast. But because the President's party members were indicted he has refused and/or failed to take any measures to recover the looted funds or punish the criminals.

Senator Baba Kaka Garba representing Borno Central, exposed how some individuals, known to have connections with the APC, fraudulently cornered N1.2billion from the Federal Government under the guise of supplying items to the IDPs, only for the money to be diverted for other purposes (which are related to APC interests). Of course, the Federal Government did nothing.

The former Secretary to the Federal Government of the Federation (SGF), Babachir Lawal who was openly indicted by the Senate for stealing funds meant for IDP activities, was arrested after a public outcry but was quickly released with a pat on the wrist.

Recently, Amnesty International issued its 2017/2018 report on Human Rights in Nigeria and found that there were gross human right abuses and violation of basic rights of freedom of association and expression by the Nigerian Government and its agencies. As if to corroborate the veracity of the Amnesty Report, the United States Department of State on Friday, 22nd of April released a damning report on human rights abuses in Nigeria stating clearly that violations continued to increase in 2017 while officials who perpetrated them were almost never prosecuted by the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari.

Violations of human rights, including primitive gender abuses, denial of fair public trial, executive influence on the judiciary, restrictions on citizen's privacy rights, freedom of speech and the press are rampant. The report stated clearly that "impunity remained widespread at all levels of government. The government did not adequately investigate or prosecute most of the major outstanding allegations of human right violations by security forces or the majority of cases of police or military extortion or other abuse of power". The report also confirmed widespread and prevalent official corruption and lack of accountability by this administration.

Having laid bare the facts, we respectfully invite the United Nations (UN), its Agencies and the international community to note the developments in our land and stand in defense of democracy. We pray you to graciously bring this petition to the attention of world leaders and to assert utmost persuasive

PLOT TO SUBVERT THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

Indications that the ruling APC does not intend to abide by the provisions of the constitution of Nigeria and the Electoral Act came to the fore in February 2018 when the National Executive Committee resolved to illegally extend the terms of the incumbent National Working Committee of the party to pave the way for the sole candidature of President Buhari contrary to the unambiguous provisions of section 223 of the Nigerian Constitution on the tenure of the national working committee of a political party. It has now emerged that the President and the ruling party are in collusion with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to manipulate the processes leading to and influence the outcome of the 2019 general elections.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has been indicted for registering and issuing Permanent Voters Card (PVCs) to millions of under-aged persons, particularly in Kano and Katsina states. INEC has refused to take decisive steps to restore the sanctity of its register, particularly in these states, but has rather made a puerile explanation of plans to investigate the allegation. The nation was petrified by the Commission's Director of Publicity and Voter's Education, Mr Oluwole Osaze-Uzzi, who announced that the INEC registered minors because its agents were threatened by members of the communities in those states.

The plan by INEC to ask the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to help them monitor campaign funds is clearly an illegal and Machiavellian way of suppressing opposition's financial contributions and spending. It is a plot to detain, frame up, intimidate and illegally block bank accounts of opposition members under the pretext that they have been mandated by INEC to monitor campaign funds.

Plans are in top gear by INEC in connivance with the federal government to surreptitiously and illegally create additional 30,000 new polling units, 70% of which will be allocated to the north whilst 30% will be allocated to the south. This move was initiated by INEC before the last election and jettisoned due to overwhelming public outcry. INEC is now trying to discreetly re-introduce the extra polling units as a safety net for a desperate President Buhari.

THREE YEARS OF INEPT LEADERSHIP HAS CAUSED UNTOLD HARDSHIP FOR NIGERIANS

Due to poor economic management, unguided presidential statements coupled with wrong monetary and fiscal policies, the value of the Naira plummeted from N185 – 1USD to N500 – 1USD and the economy slid into recession within the first year of the current administration. The dollar currently exchanges for N370. The Federal Government attempted to delude Nigerians by claiming that the Naira has become stable whilst glossing over the fact that it fell from about N165/1USD in 2015 to N500/1USD before it struggled to its current rate which is still 100% higher than it was when President Buhari assumed office.

Unemployment has continued to increase with many more persons losing their jobs, as factories and businesses close shop in the face of very harsh operating environment, high cost of doing business and perennial failure to implement the federal government budget.

Inflation and high cost of living have made life unbearable for the ordinary Nigerian made worse by the devaluation of the Naira without any palliative measures to cushion the effects. Rather than initiate socioeconomic policies to alleviate the sufferings of our people, the federal government continues to put the blame on the previous administration from which it took over in 2015 and on the Nigerian people. Recently, the president told the world that the Nigerian youth is indolent, uneducated and unreasonable.

In its attempt to further hoodwink Nigerians, the Federal Government through the minister of information cleverly stated that the nation's Foreign Reserves had risen to \$40bn, whilst covering the fact presented by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) that our foreign debt has also escalated to \$15.2bn during the same period.

Nigeria's public debt stock rose to N21.73trillion from N12.2trillion, a staggering 78.11%. The World Bank thinks this rate is worrisome and raises grave issues of sustainability yet the Buhari led APC government propaganda machine keeps touting bogus external reserve growth figures. The Federal Government also failed to inform Nigerians that other financial instruments are being simultaneously depleted, including the Excess Crude Account (ECA), from which they attempted to pilfer \$1bn last year.

According to the World Poverty Clock, an organization that assesses poverty across the globe using credible data obtained from the United Nations (UN), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, Nigeria would become the extreme poverty capital of the world by the end of March overtaking India as the country with the most people in extreme poverty.

people and may further plunge the nation into turmoil as more people are slaughtered in the attacks in Kaduna, Taraba, Adamawa and other states.

The President openly admitted that the Inspector General of Police refused to obey a presidential directive to temporarily relocate the Police operational headquarters to Benue state in the wake of the killings in that state, but the President failed to sanction the Inspector-General of police and did not as much as issue a query to the ering police chief who continues in office to oversee the killings.

The PDP is worried that a time of distress when innocent Nigerians were still being slaughtered and families were crying out for help, the President was busy receiving APC governors on orchestrated self-serving visit to Aso Rock Villa to endorse his personal ambition for second tenure, unmindful that a soothing word and practical action from his presidency would have helped ease the pains and reassure the people.

The police is now raiding homes of law abiding citizens to retrieve lawfully acquired firearms in some cities to render the people defenseless to these attacks. Meanwhile, not even one armed bandit amongst the hordes of brigands ravaging our communities has been disarmed. Revocation of firearms licences previously issued to law abiding private persons and refusal to issue new ones is part of a policy now being aggressively pursued by some police commands to actively mop up arms from law abiding citizens leaving them vulnerable and defenseless to these supervised killings.

THEM

Nigerians were shocked when the Federal Government claimed that it spends N24 billion monthly (N77 million per day) to subsidize petrol (fuel) supply in the country. This is the same government which claimed that it had abolished fuel subsidy payments as the justification for increasing the pump price of petrol by nearly 100% and even accused the immediate past administration of alleged corruption in its subsidy management. It is difficult to comprehend that in spite of the expenditure of such humongous sums, Nigerians are still paying as high as N250 to N300 per liter of fuel in various parts of the country.

The Federal Government, from their own admission is paying Subsidy to the tune of N1.4 Trillion unbudgeted annually as against the budgeted N261B annual disbursement which was the case before 2015. It is also on record that the daily petrol consumption has risen from 28m litres to 60m litres daily and account of leakages orchestrated by government officials.

LARGE SCALE OFFICIAL CORRUPTION OF MONUMENTAL SCALE

The so-called War Against Corruption has transmuted into a coven of sleaze and graft of unprecedented dimension. Corruption is so condoned in official quarters that the Chairman of EFCC remains in office even after the Directorate of State Security (DSS) found him unfit for the office and the Nigerian Senate acting on that report rejected his nomination. Discerning Nigerians have made it clear that what has been going on is the persecution of members of the opposition under the guise of anticorruption war while monumental corruption is being perpetrated by officials of the government.

Transparency International (TI) again vindicated our position that corruption is getting worse under this government. In its 2017 index, TI said that whereas Nigeria was ranked one hundred and thirty-six (136) in 2015, the country is now ranked one hundred and forty-eight (148) out of one hundred and eighty (180) countries surveyed in 2017 and the situation is getting worse.

The activities of the Ministries, Departments and Agencies of government have been fraught with monumental financial malfeasance.

The leaked official memorandum of the Minister of State for Petroleum Resources Dr Kachikwu showing underhand oil contracts to the tune of N9 trillion (\$25 billion dollars) at the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and the Ministry of Petroleum Resources which are under purview of President Buhari as the substantive Petroleum Minister was swept under the table in a most cavalier manner.

The government has increased taxes, levies and tariffs without a transparent remittance regime. The funds said to have been recovered in the anti-graft war have not been adequately accounted for but the government propaganda machinery continues to hoodwink Nigerians while its cabal continues to fritter away funds meant for good of the people.

The government disposition to issues of corruption is best defined by the shocking and scandalous recall by President Muhammadu Buhari of the suspended executive secretary of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS), Prof. Usman Yusuf, who was still under investigation by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission for alleged Ng19million fraud.

This government official had been investigated and indicted for abuse of office and fraud to the tune of Ng19million by a committee set up by the Minister of Health comprising of senior officials of the health ministry, Department of State Services (DSS) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC) and which report was submitted to the President last September.

Instead of allowing for the conclusion of investigation and eventual prosecution by EFCC, the President halted the process and rewarded the indicted official with a recall from suspension, even without any recourse to the supervising minister simply because Prof Yusuf is of the APC and known to be a very close friend of the President.

There is also the puzzling case of a certain fugitive rogue named AbdulRasheed Maina, a mid-level civil servant, who was reinstated to service by the present government and promoted. The said Maina had been dismissed from service and declared wanted for theft of N2billion pension funds by the immediate past administration of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Perhaps, the lowest point of this government's corruption infamy was the attempt by the Attorney General of the Federation (AGF) (who master minded the shameful plot in the first place) to persuade the federal high court in Abuja to grant him an injunction restraining the Senate from investigating the circumstance surrounding the reinstatement and promotion of Mr Maina.

The federal government has been struggling to rationalize and legalise the unilateral withdrawal of USD1billion from the Excess Crude Account (ECA) purportedly for the fight against Boko Haram without the prior approval of the National Assembly which has the sole power to appropriate funds for federal expenditure. Just recently, the president unilaterally and unconstitutionally disbursed the sum of USD 496billion from the Excess Crude Account (ECA),

measures to compel President Buhari and his government to save Nigeria from avoidable strife and attendant loss of lives and property. The world must hold the Buhari administration responsible should there be any political violence in any part of the country at this critical time. Finally, let me assure you that our political Party will continue to pursue the ideals of democracy for the common good of the people as laid down by the founding fathers of our Party.

Please, accept the good wishes of the leadership of the Peoples Democratic Party and the assurance of my high esteem.

Prince Uche Secondus
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CC.

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