



PRESS STATEMENT

April 9, 2018

\$17 Million Shady Payments Allegedly Ordered by AGF Malami: CHRICED Urges Buhari to Take Swift Action

The Resource Centre for Human Rights & Civic Education (CHRICED) is seriously disturbed by reports that the Minister of Justice and Attorney-General of the Federation, Abubakar Malami, ordered the payment of \$17million to two lawyers, supposedly handling the final repatriation of the Abacha loot from the Swiss government. Although the payment was reportedly blocked by the Minister of Finance Mrs. Kemi Adeosun, the audacity behind such an opaque, fraudulent and questionable transaction initiated from the office of the Attorney-General of the Federation (AGF), calls for serious scrutiny and sanctions, if President Muhammadu Buhari is to salvage whatever credibility is left off the anti-corruption crusade. It is a known fact that the AGF has consistently used his exalted office to embarrass the country and make serious mess of the anti-corruption fight. From his involvement in the reinstatement of the fugitive pension task team boss, Mr. Abdurashied Maina to his incessant harassment of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) so as to pressure it to act in favour of corrupt interests, the AGF has been using his office for purposes that have since been discredited. It is therefore a big surprise that his principal, the President, an acclaimed anti-corruption czar, has not deemed it important to kick him out of the post ever since.

Coming at a time when the government is attempting to take the moral high ground by publishing a list of looters, this embarrassing development from the supposed chief law officer of the federation, is classic example how the administration undermines itself due to the activities of morally bankrupt members of the government. CHRICED has made it abundantly clear in its previous interventions that Mr. Malami is definitely not on the same page with his principal, when it comes to the anti-corruption crusade. Apart from the serious accountability burden, which this fraudulent transaction places on the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, one important question to ask is: did the President authorize such an opaque and questionable payment? If not, is it now the practice that ministers can on their own go forward with transactions running into millions of dollars without express clearance from the President?

CHRICED is of the considered view that it is time to deal with the ingrained tendency for sleazy stories emanating from the office of the AGF. An individual heading an office that would superintend over an attempt to dupe Nigeria of \$17 million through questioned payment for a non-existent service, can no longer be entrusted with such high responsibility. The attempt to further fiddle with the recovered Abacha loot is most heartless, considering the time, stress and resources Nigeria has invested in trying to get the money back. This latest scandal from the office of the AGF would also be a further excuse by other countries and offshore jurisdictions where hundreds of millions of looted monies have been traced to. President Buhari needs to send out a clear message to show this kind of behavior is not acceptable, if

he still wants the anti-corruption programme to be taken seriously, not as a costly joke. CHRICED also calls on the entire civil society to keep a close watch on how the recovered loot is spent through a meticulous programme of monitoring and citizen involvement to ensure the monies are used for the benefit of the long suffering people of Nigeria.

Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria!

Signed:

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Executive Director