



CHRICED PRESS STATEMENT

June 6, 2018

NASS IMPEACHMENT THREAT AGAINST PRESIDENT MUHAMMADU BUHARI: NIGERIANS MUST RISE AGAINST CORRUPT AND CRIMINAL INTERESTS

The Resource Centre for Human Rights & Civic Education (CHRICED) has followed with all attentiveness, recent sordid developments in the polity, including the recent threats by the leadership of the National Assembly to impeach President Muhammadu Buhari. CHRICED makes no mistake about the fact that these threats are the handiwork of corrupt and criminal interests, which have hijacked key national institutions and are using them to further their narrow interests, which are clearly at variance with the interests of the Nigerian people.

As a credible civic group, which has been working to support democratic governance in Nigeria for over a decade, CHRICED is in a vantage position to know when corrupt anti-democratic forces are at work. From the years spent in the trenches insisting that Nigerians deserve a better deal from those who purport to govern them, we understand when state institutions are used as platforms for outright blackmail and subterfuge. For us therefore, it is abnormal, and a clear aberration for the National Assembly to constitute itself into a cohort, whose objective is to prevent all efforts to hold account those of their members, including their helmsman, who has questions to answer before the law enforcement agencies of the country.

CHRICED has no shade of doubt about the fact that the banal threat of impeachment is a crude response to the invitation to the Senate President, Bukola Saraki by the nation's police force to answer key questions with respect to an ongoing investigation into a bloody bank robbery, which claimed the lives of 33 people, including 9 policemen, in Offa, Kwara State in April. If Nigeria was a country, where law and order is taken seriously, the mere mention of the number one legislator in connection with such heinous crime will result in his stepping down to clear his name.

It is therefore clear to us that as an instrument of blackmail, what the proponents of impeachments have in mind is to intimidate the President, such that when they begin the process of their threatened impeachment, he would call on the relevant agencies to back down on the push to hold certain individuals accountable for the alleged infraction of the laws of the land, resulting in the dastardly killing of 33 Nigerians. This much we can glean from the horse trading, which is being perfected at the instance of the so called new PDP within APC, which in recent negotiations with the Vice President, Professor Yemi Osinbajo, insisted that criminal charges against members of the National Assembly, including Senator Dino Melaye be dropped as a precondition for reconciliation. For us, these are clear indications that the forces using the National Assembly to further their narrow interests want to undermine the rule of law, and by extension derail the anti-corruption fight, which in spite of its imperfections, has recorded remarkable gains.

More than ever, CHRICED considers this development a critical national moment, where the anti-corruption fight, and the push to ensure justice is meted out for all acts of crimes, need to be supported. CHRICED insists that the extant laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, give the Police the powers to investigate crimes that have been committed either by individuals or

groups. The bane of our law enforcement problem in this country has been that the rich and the mighty have for a long time become untouchable with respect to the extant laws of the land. The weight of the law, is therefore only visited on the poor and vulnerable, who are made to face long prison terms for offences. Under the current dispensation, clear efforts are being made to change that narrative. So far, from all sides of the political divide, those that have committed heinous crimes, including looting the public treasury, are being placed on trial.

This brings us to the issue of the Offa robbery, which we know is the crux of the anger of the National Assembly against the President. In the thinking of the leadership of the National Assembly, legislators are above the law, which is why they would frown at any attempt to hold any of their fellow members to account. Therefore, it does not matter to the supposed legislators that documentary and video evidence obtained by the Police allegedly links the Senate President, Bukola Saraki to the kingpins who masterminded the bloody robbery that ended the lives of 33 citizens. CHRICED is therefore not surprised that before the invitation by the Police, there were already insinuations by the Senate President that there were attempts to frame him up. Now that the Police has come out clearly to state that the suspected top lawmaker has questions to answer with respect to the case, the blackmail of impeachment against the President has suddenly become the viable option to take in order to intimidate and possibly pressure the President to influence the dropping of the charges. We know that the ultimate plot is to remove the President to provide the leeway for more impunity.

For us therefore, this is a dimension of the forces of corruption and impunity fighting back against the President for daring to bring those who held high offices to account, and even push for the forfeiture of looted funds and assets. It is clear that the beneficiaries of corruption and impunity, who are well-heeled are after the assets that have been recovered. Therefore, all means, whether fair or foul are being exploited to discredit and in the end, bring down the administration. Unfortunately, the workers of iniquity, are all over the country working tirelessly to upend whatever gains that have been made to take back what was criminally looted from the Nigerian public. The vituperations and threats of impeachment from the National Assembly are therefore motivated by no other considerations, but by the narrow, selfish and corrupt interests of these elites. This is therefore the time for the people of Nigeria, who by now understand the destructive impact of the activities of those behind the sinister calls for impeachment, to stand up and defend the nation, and their own welfare, which has clearly been undermined by the corrupt interests of a few. CHRICED also calls on the President to remain firm in defence of the interest of the people. It is crucial for the President to refuse to succumb to the blackmail of those who take Nigeria as their estate, their property and their cash cow.

Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria!

Signed:

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