

PRESS RELEASE

BUHARI: THE SYMBOL OF HOPE OF A NATION

Following the criminality that was unleashed on Nigerians in the name of election in April 2007, Nigerians and friends of Nigeria found themselves in a state of shock and numbness. We at the Foundation for Good Governance and Development in Nigeria (FGGN), a UK based international organization of Nigerian professionals, have been in a similar state of shock but have been following events with a cautious optimism that soon, truth will prevail. We feel the actions of many individuals and groups need to be commended or condemned and we have therefore found it necessary at this stage to express our views.

Throughout human history there are examples of events and people who stand out, during a period, as those who influence a change in the future of the society forever. These changes may be for good or for bad but they are none the less significant. The events themselves may be good or bad but the way the society comes out of these events depends on the action or inaction of people in that society at that time. When fascism became the order of the day in Germany, Hitler decided to ride on the bandwagon rather than do the decent thing and curb it. Men and women of conscience in the society did nothing to stop the genocide that followed until humanity got engulfed in a war that was to cause so much death, destructions and suffering. On a more positive side, it took men of good will like Gandhi to start dismantling imperialism and give societies the right to govern themselves. It was the principled stand and struggle of people like Malcolm X and Martin Luther King that changed the course of the American society and the world to see the evil of racial discrimination and take positive steps to dismantle institutional racism. Closer to home and more recently the stand taken by Nelson Mandela against all odds saw the death of apartheid and now the hitherto villain Mandela is an international hero and a living hope of his people.

Coming home, the principled stand of the likes of Dr Nnamdi Azikwe, Sir Ahmadu Bello and Chief Obafemi Awolowo have an enduring positive effect in the development of our country, Nigeria. Mallam Aminu Kano's unrelenting fight to emancipate the masses of our country has left a positive lasting legacy in our political development as can be seen in the high level of political maturity and independence of the people of Kano State. More recently, the stand of leaders like the former Senate President, Senator Ken Nnamani, has raised the integrity of the upper house and given well-meaning Nigerians the hope that democracy can work if only decent people are in charge of the various democratic institutions.

Muhammadu Buhari is not a new man in the political landscape of Nigeria and in his fight to right the wrongs in our society. As a military governor of the then North Eastern State he instilled a discipline and purposeful governance. He is still being fondly remembered with nostalgia in the region. As a minister for petroleum he showed Nigerians that heading a ministry where the nation's wealth lies does not mean you own that wealth, you hold it in Trust for the people. He demonstrated to us that you can be in such a position and be incorruptible, not own an oil block or even have a foreign bank account. It was said that when the then Federal Government of Obasanjo wanted to sell NNPC in the name of privatization, Buhari asked whether NNPC was losing money or not making profit and the answer was they were making money. Buhari then submitted a counter bid by his ministry to buy the NNPC on behalf of Nigerians. That was how NNPC was saved from being sold off. When the corrupt elites and their media stooges at that time sensationalized a lie of a missing 2 billion dollars, Buhari challenged Obasanjo to institute an investigative panel – a challenge he failed to take up then and in his recent eight years of misrule. When the military took over Shehu Shagari/Alex Ukweme's (two decent gentlemen surrounded by charlatans like Ume- Nzokwe in the party-NPN)

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government, it was said that the military junta planned to execute the politicians and it was Buhari who said he will not be a party to that. It was then agreed to lock the politicians up and investigate and punish the guilty and free the innocent ones accordingly. It was, among other things, one of the reasons that made Late Chief Chuba Okadigbo come closer to Buhari when he got to know that fact. Buhari's 20- months rule and General Murtala Mohammed's 6- months rule were periods in Nigeria when action-packed, purposeful and transparent governance was witnessed by Nigerians. These two leaders are the only heads of states amongst all others that ordinary well-meaning Nigerians still feel would have saved Nigeria from the decay that it is in now had they ruled for at least four years at a stretch. Nigerians, not the majority of the corrupt elites or corrupt and hungry charlatan politicians like Ume-Nzokwe, know who are their genuine leaders and patriots. When Buhari headed the PTF, he demonstrated how a purposeful planning and execution of projects with transparency can achieve so much with limited funds.

The coming of Buhari into partisan politics in 2003 brought hope to Nigerians and life back to a comatose party –the ANPP. Unfortunately, the party leadership and most of the ANPP governors were only interested in power and looting and they went to party with, and did the dirty work of undermining their party for Obasanjo and the ruling PDP, rather than form a credible opposition. Buhari alone, with the Kano State Governor Shekarau at the initial stages by his side, fought the rigging of 2003 through the judicial system that tried to frustrate him for about three years. By doing that he tested one of the main democratic institutions and exposed the weaknesses of that institution and the meddling that was perpetuated by a president who does not believe in the rule of law. Although Buhari did not receive the justice he looked for, he has strengthened our democratic system by that act.

Buhari then reached out to all groups and sections of the country and formed alliances. He

demonstrated what politics is all about while keeping his principles and integrity in a political environment that has lost all sense of decency, fairness and the pursuit of the rule of law and where public trust had been mortgaged. In 2007, against all odds, Buhari again emerged as the presidential candidate of the ANPP as a result of unmistakable yearnings of the masses. When Obasanjo, Maurice Iwu and the PDP leadership decided not to hold an election but to allocate to their stooges and cronies all elective posts, including the presidency, Buhari took it upon himself to fight on behalf of decent Nigerians who believe in democracy but got disillusioned by what happened in April 2007. Buhari took his case to the tribunal and, once again, the leadership of his party, the ANPP, is now doing their best to undermine him and his case. The party leadership showed they do not care about any rule of law, democracy/democratic institutions, the electorates or the party. Instead of fighting on behalf of their supporters who were denied that chance of electing their leaders or making the party a strong opposition in line with democratic ideals, they want to protect their loots and join the cake sharing with the PDP.

It is not just the ANPP leadership that has betrayed Nigerians. The same people who created lies to sabotage Buhari by painting him as a religious (Muslim) bigot in 2003 are now using so-called Muslim scholars to pressurize him and even insinuate that Buhari is not a good Muslim as he refused to withdraw his case at the tribunal. These so called Muslim scholars seem to have forgotten that Nigeria is a secular country and that the elections were not a Muslim or non Muslim affair. In any case, Islam stands for justice. Similarly, various groups who arrogate themselves as Northern leaders want Buhari to withdraw his case because the government is now headed by a northerner, as if the presidential election was conducted only in Northern Nigeria and that the president governs only that region. Then there is the other group, the traditional rulers, who have lost their relevance in the society because of their greed and the shameful way they have been handling themselves over the years. Rather than play a fatherly role and be on the side

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of their people, who were denied the right to elect their leaders, they sheepishly forged alliances with whoever is in power so as to share the loot. For that is, unfortunately, what governance has become in Nigeria.

Buhari went into politics, as he did when he joined the military, to serve Nigeria and Nigerians irrespective of their religious beliefs. During the electioneering campaigns he went to all parts of Nigeria asking for their votes and they turned out en-mass to welcome him and show support and solidarity with him. These people were then denied their right to vote and have their votes count as it should be in any democracy. It is for these Nigerians and posterity that Buhari is fighting as he should. He cannot abandon these people when they have been traumatized and brutalized. We equally feel that all those who believe in true multiparty democracy, including Umaru Yar'Adua if he truly believes in true democracy, should commend, not condemn, Buhari for going to court and insisting on justice to be done in view of what happened in April 2007 in the name of election in a "Democratic" Nigeria. By standing firm against the pressure from northern traditional rulers, so-called Muslim scholars/leaders and northern leaders, Buhari has shown himself as a true patriotic Nigerian who has the interest of all Nigerians at heart. Without a shadow of doubt Buhari is as northern as any of the northern leaders, as Muslim as any of the Muslim scholars and a leader in the North as any of, if not better than, those calling on him to withdraw his case. He is probably closer to Umaru Yar'Adua hereditarily and culturally than anyone of them. The struggle is not a personal, religious or regional one. Buhari's struggle is in the interest of Nigeria and democracy and he should be commended and seen as a unifying force in a fractured country. It will be a sad day when all northerners or all southerners or all Muslims or all Christians are to forget justice and fair play and support "their own" simply because he/she is one of "them". Buhari is the symbol of hope of the nation (Nigeria), for it is only with people like him in

our society that we will ever be a united and prosperous nation. Buhari and others like him such as Gani Fawehemi, Senator Ken Nnamani, Tam David-West, Balarabe Musa and the likes are the people that have kept Nigeria together by giving Nigerians hope of a future Nigeria, not those who cut deals and form compromises in their narrow selfish interest rather than national interest.

We therefore give our full support and solidarity to Muhammadu Buhari in his judicial challenge to the flawed election and in the struggle to enshrine true democracy in Nigeria with fully functioning democratic institutions. We therefore call on Buhari and all those who took their challenge of the 2007 rigged (s)election to the tribunals to be steadfast and pursue their cases to the logical end. We equally request all well meaning Nigerians and friends of Nigeria to support these men and women. Finally, we urge the judiciary to protect its integrity and dispense justice not play politics.

*Long Live the Federal Republic of Nigeria!
Long Live the Foundation for Good Governance
and Development in Nigeria!!*

For and on behalf of *the Foundation*:

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