

FOUNDATION FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

Press Release

Incessant Political Murders in Nigeria

The Foundation for Good Governance in Nigeria (FGGN) has been following, with keen interest, political developments in Nigeria and is deeply disturbed with the increasing wave of political killings in the country.

The recent gruesome murders of opposition politicians have raised serious concerns about the credibility and peaceful conduct of the upcoming general elections in Nigeria. In particular, the brutal murder of Dr. Harry Marshall on Wednesday 5th February 2003 is blatantly cynical given the fact that Dr. Marshall was the ANPP Campaign Coordinator in the South-South Zone where the ANPP presidential campaign was scheduled to kick off this Saturday, 8 March. In addition, Dr. Marshall was well known for his grassroots support in the South-South zone and that he posed a serious electoral threat to the ruling party (PDP) in that region as well as at the centre. It should be noted that Dr. Marshall virtually single-handedly delivered the zone for the PDP in the 1999 general elections, but he later decamped from the ruling party to join the ANPP.

It should be recalled that in the past few weeks, assassins murdered two other opposition party stalwarts in Imo State, South Eastern Nigeria. One of those murdered was an ANPP senatorial candidate for Orlu Senatorial Zone, Chief Ogbonaya Uche, who was also believed to pose a real threat to PDP in that State.

This violence is not only a crime against ANPP but also a crime against the country in its march towards a mature nationhood and enduring democracy. This is the ultimate madness, callous and despicable act of human rights abuse.

One of the fundamental responsibilities of any reasonable government is the protection of lives, honour and properties of its citizens. Unfortunately, the present Nigerian government has woefully failed to live up to this responsibility. To ensure violence-free and fair electioneering campaigns as well as peaceful, free and fair elections in April 2003, the FGGN calls on the Federal Government not only to unequivocally apologise to the nation for this abysmal failure, but also to take real measures to equip the security apparatus in the country to effectively stamp out this barbarism.

In view of these desperate political murders, all coming on the heels of the General Elections in Nigeria, the FGGN strongly believes that these types of political killings would portend serious troubles for Nigeria's nascent democracy. We know that in the

past, these types of development in that part of the world had succeeded in derailing the democratic process thereby ushering in military regimes and dictatorships with devastating consequences.

The FGGN therefore calls on all Nigerians and friends of Nigeria, particularly Britain and the Commonwealth, the European Union, the United States of America, Canada, as well as non-governmental organisations and all lovers of democracy in the International Community to stand up to ensure that these anti-democratic indices do not derail the democratic process in Nigeria.

The FGGN also calls on the International Community to actively participate in developing credible monitoring systems for the next coming general elections in Nigeria. Already, the Secretary General of the electoral body, Independent National Election Commission (INEC), has hinted that there is ample evidence to suggest that the April 2003 would be massively rigged unless Nigerian voters take extra careful measures. This is a wake up call to the International Community to make sure that credible international observers are put in place so that Nigeria's general elections are conducted in a free and fair manner since Nigerian voters will be powerless to prevent any election malpractices.

This is a trying moment for Nigeria and the international community should not be idle bystanders but active participants to sustain the democratic system of governance. Nigeria, now more than ever before, needs its International allies to ensure that the efforts they put in the past towards Nigeria's democratisation process did not come to naught. A democratic Nigeria, with good governance and transparent leadership, is a beacon of hope for Africa in particular and the world in general.

Long Live the Federal Republic of Nigeria!

Long Live the *Foundation for Good Governance in Nigeria!*

For and on behalf of *the Foundation*:

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