

An Open Letter to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu

By Stephanie Shakaa

Mr. President, please, read this, it isn't from your enemy, not from your opposition. Mr. President, this is not just a letter. It's a cry of the people. A nation on the brink needs leadership, not silence. Is Nigeria still worth fighting for?" Sir, this isn't from your opposition. It's not from a political enemy. It's from a citizen, tired, exhausted, but still hopeful. Still daring to believe that Nigeria can breathe again. Mr. President, this is not war. We are not your enemies. We are your responsibility. And right now, this nation is gasping for air under the weight of your policies.

Mr. President, we are not writing this to disrespect you. We are writing because we are slowly disappearing. We are not even angry anymore. Anger takes energy. And we're too exhausted for that now. We are simply tired. Tired of adapting. Tired of surviving. Tired of clenching our teeth and pretending things are fine. Tired of being told to tighten belts that no longer exist. Tired of selling properties to pay school fees. Tired of eating once and calling it intermittent fasting. Tired of telling our children "next week" when we don't even know if we'll make it to next week.

Our salaries die on the way to the market. A bag of rice now costs more than some people's monthly income. A loaf of bread is a luxury item. We have become accountants of misery counting every naira like a funeral dirge. We are tired of juggling bills and prayers. We are tired of watching the rich get richer and the poor get forgotten. Of hearing politicians speak English while we speak hunger. Of prayers that now feel like unanswered phone calls to heaven. Mr. President, this letter is not wrapped in protocol. It is not dressed in agbada or softened by political correctness. It is raw, like the streets. It is tired, like the people. It is urgent, like a mother's scream in the night when her child is hungry and ill. It is a lamentation. A mirror. A record of what it feels like to be a Nigerian in this moment. We are not writing to attack you. We are writing because silence is starting to look like consent. And we do not consent to this version of Nigeria. You came to us with the chant of "Renewed Hope." But sir, hope cannot survive on slogans. Hope is not a billboard or a retweet. Hope must feed. Hope must heal. Hope must carry us to the market and bring us back with something in our bags, not just dust and despair.

Mr. President, have you seen us lately? We are the ones



calculating our budgets all night because the expenses don't fit the salary. We are the ones walking to work under the sun because transport is now a luxury. We are the ones skipping meals, not because we're fasting, but because we simply cannot afford to eat. The minimum wage is a national joke. The Naira is on life support. And every day, the headlines are a slap to the face of a suffering people another convoy, another celebration, another empty promise. Sir, this is not governance. This is survival of the political class at the expense of the governed. You promised change. We want to believe you. But belief is bleeding. We are not asking for miracles we are asking for leadership with eyes open and ears to the ground. We are asking for policies that make sense, not just to economists in glass offices, but to market women in Onitsha and civil servants in Yola. We are asking that you see us not just as votes, not just as statistics in your inauguration speech but as humans, Nigerians, exhausted but still believing.

Mr. President, the streets are watching. The youth are no longer naive. The silent ones are beginning to speak. And when a people begin to cry in unison, even history listens. Let this not be another tragic chapter. Let it be the page where something changed for real. Not with fanfare. But with food in the pot. Light in the socket. Justice in the courts. And truth at the podium. Do not let power blind

you. Do not let politics bury your purpose. And above all, do not let the cries of Nigerians become mere background noise in the villa. You came with the promise of “Renewed Hope.” That was your campaign anthem. But sir, what we received instead is renewed hardship, renewed hunger, renewed hopelessness. Yes, subsidy was removed. Yes, the naira was floated. But what floated for you drowned the rest of us. You say “be patient.” But patience requires the belief that something better is coming. What is coming, Mr. President? What's coming for the widow in Aba who can't afford her blood pressure medication? What's coming for the teacher who hasn't been paid in months? What's coming for the Uber driver who now sleeps in his car because he can't afford both fuel and rent? Have you been to the market lately? Have you asked what | 10,000 can buy? Do you know what it's like to negotiate with a bus driver when your entire transport fare is sitting in your palm? Have you ever stood in front of your children, empty-handed, and lied that you already ate? This is not about opposition politics. It is about daily pain. Pain that doesn't make it to the news. Pain that doesn't trend on social media. Pain that we wear like skin. We are not asking for miracles. We are asking for common sense. For intentional leadership. For policies that consider the man on the street, not just the men in suits.

You govern a country of over 200 million people, but it often feels like your government is for 200 elites and their inner circle. We're not here to insult you. We're here to beg or visibility. To remind you that leadership is not about convoy length or photo ops. It's about who eats. Who lives. Who breathes. Because sir, Nigeria is not breathing. Hospitals are overwhelmed. Schools are underfunded. Security is inconsistent. Inflation is unchecked. And everywhere you turn, there's a quiet desperation in the eyes of the people. We have become a nation of survival experts. Of resilient ghosts. Of dreamers turned skeptics. Of prayer warriors who now wonder if heaven has blocked Nigeria's number. We say “e go better,” but deep down, many are starting to believe it won't. That belief is dangerous. It kills nations long before bullets do. Mr. President, we are not enemies. We are citizens. We are the ones who wave flags at independence parades and sing the anthem with cracked voices. We are the ones who keep this country afloat teachers, nurses, farmers, traders, students, civil servants. We are the ones you swore to serve.

Serve us. Hear us. See us. We are the heartbeat of the country. And right now, that heart is skipping beats. This country is bleeding. From Kaduna to Enugu, from Zamfara to Bayelsa. And while citizens ration food, the headlines speak of billions approved, new appointments, luxury vehicles, and government retreats. We're not even asking for luxury. We're asking for dignity. We are asking that people don't have to choose between feeding their children and paying rent. That a young Nigerian doesn't have to gamble his life in the desert or on the Mediterranean Sea to believe in a future. That a mother doesn't have to watch her child die from a treatable illness

because the public hospital has no doctors, no drugs, and no light.

Do you hear us, sir, The students? The artisans. The civil servants. The market women. The nurses. The job seekers. The forgotten. The silent majority that is now simply trying to exist. Please don't say we should keep hope alive if you're going to keep killing the conditions that sustain it. History has its pen out. The world is watching. Nigerians are watching too, not with excitement anymore, but with a tired gaze and heavy hearts. This letter is not political. It is personal. Because we all know someone who's had to beg for school fees. Someone who's left the country. Someone who's been kidnapped. Someone who's died because the system failed. We know them. We love them. We are them.

Mr. President, this isn't just about your legacy. This is about the people you govern. And we are saying with one voice: Let Nigeria breathe again. Let the children dream again. Let the markets live again. Let salaries mean something again. Because salaries die on the way to the market. Hope, that fragile thread keeping us together, is thinning fast. Do you know what it feels like to check the price of food before saying yes to your child's request? To buy fuel in 2-litre jerry cans like contraband? To go to work and still beg to survive? This is not a call for pity. It is a call for perspective. You have the power to change the direction of this country. The question is doing you have the will? We are not asking for the impossible. We are asking for policies rooted in reality. For roads that are drivable. For power that doesn't disappear every hour. For minimum wage that can buy minimum dignity. For hospitals that don't look like waiting rooms for death. We are asking that when the people cry, their government doesn't turn up the music. Let dignity return. Govern with empathy. Act with urgency. Lead like you truly understand that power is borrowed. That time is limited. That pain ignored eventually erupts.

This is not a threat. It's a truth. We are still Nigerian. Still hopeful. But we are no longer blind. And if you truly meant “Renewed Hope,” then now is the time to prove it. Not tomorrow. Not after another summit. Not after another crisis. Now.

Because people are not just losing faith. They are losing everything. This open letter is the most painful thing I've written about Nigeria. Mr. President, please read it. Even if your aides won't let you feel us this is us.”

Sincerely,

A Citizen with a Voice. And a Breaking Heart. We are tired, because this tiredness is not just emotional, it is national Mr. President. This is not the kind of tiredness that sleep can fix. We are tired in our minds. Our spirits. Our wallets. Our bodies. Our dreams. Please let this tiredness matter.

Yours sincerely,

Stephanie Sewuese Shaakaa

Daughter. Mother. Citizen. Voice from the valley.