

2023 Election:

The betrayal, the Tragedy, the Shame

By Tony Eluemunor

First the betrayal: President Muhammadu Buhari and the Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) without being prompted by anyone, repeatedly promised Nigerians a free and fair election in February 2023. Buhari promised that a transparent 2023 election would be his legacy project. Yet, what happened? International observers have derided both Nigeria and the elections. Both Buhari and the INEC Chairman, Prof Mahmood Yakubu knew that giving Nigeria a flawless general election was doable, that the money projected to meet the logistics that would make the poll transparent was duly budgeted for and the monies made available to the electoral agency. The computing systems that would make it possible to upload results real time, and so deny election riggers the opportunity of cooking the figures at the so-called collating centres, were designed. The right laws were in place. The INEC chairman was even seen in a video boasting that the results would be uploaded as they trickled in from the polling units, Nigerians had such a right.

Then the day arrived for Buhari and the INEC chairman to walk their talks, and they betrayed Nigeria. Suddenly, the results were not uploaded. Suddenly, the ones that had, perhaps mistakenly, been uploaded were scrubbed. Then in the Nigeria of 2023, despite all the billions spent buying the needed computing gadgets despite all the progress in computing and telephony, Nigeria returned to the dark ages of manual collation of election results, which enabled all sorts of criminalities to be acted out upon the peoples' votes.

Why have I termed this failure a betrayal? It is a betrayal because the means to make the 2023 election angelically transparent was available to Buhari and INEC. The two chose to betray their country. They made a deliberate choice. I have linked or hooked both of them together because Buhari appointed Prof. Yakubu. Had there been a direct transmission of the results from each polling unit to the general public through the portals, all the mayhem which played out in the collation centres would have been avoided. That the choice was there to make the votes from

This is as the entire world mocks Nigeria for the election fiasco and cash-swap cash crunch has made Nigeria a hell on earth and petrol scarcity has worsened the hell Buhari's administration has turned Nigeria into. Couldn't someone advise Buhari to cancel that trip because other leaders would be mocking him as an ineffectual leader who would jet out when his country men and women were being besieged on various fronts by problems that no longer exist in other parts of the world? That trip has heaped shame on Nigerians for only unserious leaders would travel out of their countries despite "the fire on the mountain".

each unit to be uploaded directly to the public, but that route was deliberately disdained, must be noted.

Betrayal entails unfaithfulness, duplicity, infidelity, treachery and disloyalty. If faults other than betrayal had caused the chaos, unmitigated havoc, bedlam and anarchy with which Nigeria's sordid history was worsened on February 25, 2023, that day's election should have been canceled. That brings us to the tragedy of that election. That day's poll was a tragedy because it was an unmitigated disaster for Nigeria. The peoples choice of who should be their freely elected leader was disdained as in despised, spurned, disparaged and treated with massive and audacious contempt. This is tragic because the election meant the world for our teaming youths. Suddenly, matters "Nigeriana" began to matter to them. If this election is not redeemed and the wrongs done to their human rights (implicit in the

very act of their being constitutionally responsible to choose their own leader), is not redressed, reversed and punished, they would become alienated, and totally so.

It is tragic for a nation to go through the hollow ritual of holding an election every four years. It is tragic for a nation that their President and Chairman of an electoral body would openly commit themselves to organizing free and fair elections and then go ahead and conduct the worst election in the history of the world, after having deliberately refused to engage an array of computing and telephony equipment that had been purchased for such purpose. Such acts of lawlessness and criminality always weaken a society. Ah, the shame of it all. It's shameful that our leaders are shameless.

Since the criminality that was passed off as an election on February 25th 2023 took place, the INEC Chairman has not uttered a word of regret and apology. He has shown no sense of remorse for having failed an entire country. And worst of all, less than a week after the flawed election, President Buhari travelled to Qatar, his fourth foreign trip in 2023, to attend the 5th United Nations Conference on least developed countries.