

# HURIWA condemns National Assembly over N40 billion proposed exotic prado jeeps:

The disclosure that the Senate and House of Representatives will soon expend over N40 billion to purchase vehicles for lawmakers in the Red and Green Chambers of the National Assembly as reported by a leading national newspaper, has been described as vexatious, shameless show of recklessness, irresponsibility and irrationality by the political elite of contemporary Nigerian society, so says HUMAN RIGHTS WRITERS ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (HURIWA).

It was learnt that no fewer than 107 units of the 2023 model of the Toyota Landcruiser and 358 units of the 2023 model of Toyota Prado would be procured for the use of members of the Senate and the House of Representatives respectively, even as the planned purchase is different from the official vehicles expected to be purchased for the four presiding officers of the National Assembly. These are President of the Senate, Godswill Akpabio; Speaker of the House of Representatives, Tajudeen Abass; Deputy President of the Senate, Jibrin Barau; and Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Benjamin Kalu.

Vexed by this show of shame by the Leadership of the 10th session of the National Assembly, the leading civil Rights Advocacy group-HUMAN RIGHTS WRITERS ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (HURIWA) has condemned this insensitive plan in the face of the unprecedented rate of poverty and unemployment tearing millions of citizens apart and sending hundreds of thousands of Nigerians to their early graves.

HURIWA said it is inconceivable that the politicians elected to make laws for the good governance of the society can be this crudely heartless even when the highlights of the 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index survey reveal that: 63% of persons living within Nigeria (133 million people) are multidimensionally poor.

HURIWA quoting the government's statistical report on poverty stated that the National MPI is 0.257, indicating that poor people in Nigeria experience just over one-quarter of all possible deprivations. 65% of the poor (86 million people) live in the North, while 35% (nearly 47 million) live in the South. Poverty levels across States vary significantly, with the incidence of multidimensional poverty ranging from a low of 27% in Ondo to a high of 91% in Sokoto. The report further disclosed that over half of the population of Nigeria are multidimensionally poor and cook with dung, wood or charcoal, rather than cleaner energy. High deprivations are also apparent nationally in sanitation, time to healthcare, food insecurity, and housing. "Multidimensional poverty is higher in rural areas, where 72% of people are poor, compared to 42% of people in urban areas.

The National MPI is reported with a linked Child MPI, which provides additional information on Multidimensional Child Poverty in Nigeria. According to the report:

Two-thirds (67.5%) of children (0–17) are multidimensionally poor according to the National MPI, and half (51%) of all poor people are children. The highest deprivations are in the indicator of child engagements – where over half of poor children lack the intellectual stimulation that is pivotal to early childhood development. Child poverty is prevalent in rural areas, with almost 90% of rural children experiencing poverty", says the report from the Statistician-General of the federation.

HURIWA said further that it would amount to mindless abuse of power and a negation of the constitutional if the elected legislators are left to continue to embark on spending spree to service their insatiable whims and caprices whereas millions of Nigerians are going through excruciating pains imposed on them by the singular but unjustifiable and heartless policy of sudden withdrawal of petrol subsidy by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu who has now failed to concentrate on reviving local refineries but has rather decided to fritter N500 billion in the guise of sharing N8,000 per month for 12 million poor families in a

nation with over 130 million multidimensionally poor households just as the same administration has earmarked N70 billion for less than 400 Nigerians who are National Assembly members and then another N30 billion to justices of the Courts of Nigeria in what is regarded as an attempt to bribe them and secure victory in the election oetitions challenging his declaration as the winner of the February 25th Presidential



Election.

HURIWA recalled that a media investigation revealed that the Senate Committee on Services, saddled with the responsibility of purchasing vehicles for lawmakers, will handle the negotiations and take delivery of them. Senate President, Akpabio, had, earlier constituted the Committee on Senate Services, headed by Kogi West senator, Sunday Karimi. Besides, a market survey carried out by a media house showed that the least amount for a 2023 model of Toyota Land Cruiser is N125 million. For the full option of the same brand, it goes for as high as N135 million.

HURIWA has however warned the National Assembly not to push Nigerians to the walls because if the Federal government continues to unleash poverty inflicting austerity measures in line with the dictates of the World Bank and the IMF but the political leaders continue to fritter public funds to service ostentatious lifestyle, then the elite are simply poking their hands in the eyes of the masses and challenging them to do their worst just as the Rights group reminded the politicians of the consequences of not heeding to the voice of reason because of the possibility of public angst boiling over onto the streets and precipitating uproarious riots. "This is why we are calling on the politicians at both the executive and legislative Arms of government to become responsible and be sensitive in the manner they deploy public funds.