

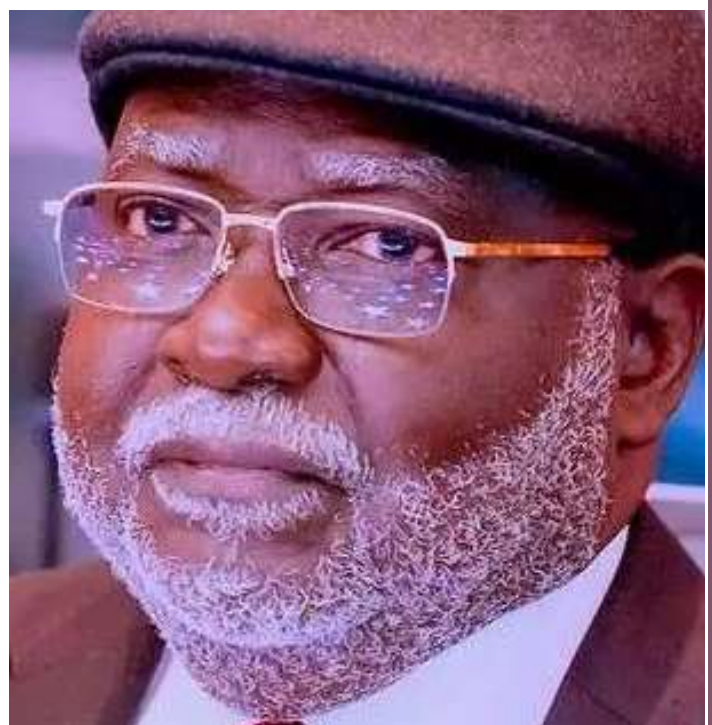
HURIWA to CJN: "Nigerians are not mobsters, their opinions matter"

Civil Rights Advocacy group- HUMAN RIGHTS WRITERS ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (HURIWA) – has urged the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Justice Olukayode Ariwoola to reconsider his adversarial, antagonistic stance towards public opinion just as the Rights group said unchecked and pervasive corruption if not wiped out in the Judiciary immediately could destroy democracy by instigating a revolution. "We in HURIWA have the greatest place of honour and veneration for the Nigerian judiciary as the bastion of hope and temple of justice for the people. We respectfully wish to appeal to His Excellency, the Chief Justice of Nigeria, to moderate his public position on the essence of public opinion and to separate jaundiced and politically sugar-coated emotive comments from rational opinions of the well meaning members of the public. We beg to disagree with the honourable, the CJN on his position about public opinion and for the hasty conclusion that the members of public are mobsters. The danger is that if the people lose faith, trust and confidence in the judiciary, they will resort to self help which may lead to destabilisation of constitutional democracy." Besides, HURIWA has asked the CJN to respond to the alleged insinuations of the capacity of the All Progressives Congress to influence the outcomes of election related cases before their lordships at the Supreme court of Nigeria as allegedly made by a member representing

Pankshin/Kanam/Kanke federal constituency of Plateau State in the House of Representatives, Yusuf Gagdi.

HURIWA recalled vividly that the said House of Representatives member came under attack last week after allegedly bragging that his party, the All Progressives Congress (APC) in Plateau State, will influence the decision of the Supreme Court on the petition challenging the outcome of the governorship election in the state. In a video trending on the social media, Gagdi was heard allegedly boasting at a rally in the state last Sunday about the APC's ability to sway victory at the Supreme Court.

HURIWA recalled that the Court of Appeal had few days back sacked Governor Caleb Mutfwang, a member of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and declared the APC candidate, Nentawe Goshwe, as the winner of the March 18 governorship election in the state. The court had overturned the judgment of the state Governorship Election Tribunal last month which affirmed Mutfwang's victory in the election. Mutfwang, who described the Court of Appeal judgment as a temporary setback, has since said he would appeal it at the Supreme Court. HURIWA recalled that the legal dispute took a strange twist when Gagdi allegedly boasted that the outcome of the governorship election at the Supreme Court would be



based on who both parties know. Gagdi was allegedly heard in the video saying thus: "We have gone to the Appeal Court and the final destination is the Supreme Court and we will meet there. That is where we will know who they know and they will know who we know," he said in the 18-seconds video clip. HURIWA recalled that whilst the lawmaker spoke, some people suspected to be APC supporters could be heard in the background hailing him. The Rights group stated that this sarcastic comment that is damaging to the reputation of the Supreme Court of Nigeria needs to be investigated by the chief justice of Nigeria because it is the silence from the judicial authority about this sort of statements that give the public the impression that the judges can be purchased by the highest bidders. Maintaining her position that public opinion that are constructive and factually accurate should matter to the nation's judiciary, the leading civil Rights body stated that the law is made for the people and must work for the people even as the organisation said it was wrong for the head of an arm of government to resist public opinion even when the constitution in section 14 (2) (a) provides that: "Sovereignty belongs to the people of Nigeria from

for the CJN to convey an impression that he pretends to say that Judges live in extra terrestrial planets. What should be done is for the CJN to encourage seamless mechanisms for fast-tracking effective whistle blowing with a view to demonstrating the willingness to instil greater transparency and accountability in the judiciary of Nigeria."

HURIWA recalled that the Chief Justice Nigeria (CJN), Justice Olukayode Ariwoola, had reiterated the judiciary's determination not to be overwhelmed by the sentiments of the "mob" in their decisions. HURIWA recalled that following the rulings on electoral disputes, which led to the sacking of some governors and lawmakers, many have accused judges of bias. But speaking at the opening of the special session of the 2023/2024 legal year and the swearing-in of 58 newly conferred Senior Advocates of Nigeria (SANs), Ariwoola asked judges to remain firm. He said, "I expect every judicial officer to work very hard and also be very honest and courteous to the litigants, witnesses and members of the bar, and discharge all your judicial functions with all the humility at your command.

"Whereas we applaud the CJN for persuasively urging Judges to follow the laws in deciding cases before them, however, we think it is an incurable and defective red herring to dismiss public opinion and concerns of patriots on perceived pervasive corruption within the Judiciary as those of a mob. It is offensive to natural law and morality for the CJN to convey an impression that he pretends to say that Judges live in extra terrestrial planets. What should be done is for the CJN to encourage seamless mechanisms for fast-tracking effective whistle blowing with a view to demonstrating the willingness to instil greater transparency and accountability in the judiciary of Nigeria."

whom government through this constitution derives all its powers and authority." HURIWA in a statement by the National Coordinator, Comrade Emmanuel Onwubiko stressed that democracy is the government of the people by the people and for the people and therefore faulted the Chief Justice of Nigeria for generalizing and by hastily ascribing the opinions of Nigerians as those of mobsters. *"Whereas we applaud the CJN for persuasively urging Judges to follow the laws in deciding cases before them, however, we think it is an incurable and defective red herring to dismiss public opinion and concerns of patriots on perceived pervasive corruption within the Judiciary as those of a mob. It is offensive to natural law and morality*

"Even while doing this, it is still necessary to have at the back of your minds that public opinion, sentiments or emotions can never take the place of the law in deciding the cases that come before you.

"The law remains the law, no matter whose interest is involved. In all we do, as interpreters of the law, we should endeavour to sever the strings of emotion from logic and assumption from fact. "We should never be overwhelmed by the actions or loud voices of the mob or crowd and now begin to confuse law with sentiment or something else in deciding our cases."