

# WAGE COMMITTEE: THIS GOVERNMENT IS WASTEFUL, INSENSITIVE, AND RECKLESSLY IRRATIONAL: HURIWA SAYS:

Prominent civil rights advocacy group: HUMAN RIGHTS WRITERS ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (HURIWA) has condemned very strongly and described as wasteful, insensitive and irresponsible, the alleged request for N1 billion by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) Senator George Akume, to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, for the workings of a 37-man national minimum wage committee. Besides, HURIWA said even though it was however reported that President Tinubu had allegedly approved half of the budget N500,000,000 for the SGF, as contained in some leaked memos, the idea of setting up such a money guzzling presidential committee on Wage negotiations is absolutely unacceptable and irregular in the face of a statutory body known as the National Incomes, salaries, and Wages Commission in existence which is clothed by law with the sole mandates of fixing or negotiating for wages both in the public and private sectors of the Nigerian federation.

HURIWA which carpeted the Secretary to the Government of the Federation for not advising the president appropriately so as to consult the already existing governmental institution for wage negotiations, queries why the government is wasting N500 million or even N1 billion for a different wage negotiations committee and neglecting the government institution responsible for that even in the face of mass hunger, absolute poverty and multidimensional poverty afflicting over 133 million Nigerian households just as the Rights group stated that the decision to fritter such precious amount of public funds to fund a temporary committee, is pure economic sabotage and an economic crime of unprecedented dimension.

HURIWA recalled that under the National salaries, incomes and wages commission Act, the body has the statutory broad mandates, functions and clothed by law with the comprehensive coverage of issues of personnel compensation just as the other main functions amongst other salient Components are: Advises the Federal Government on national incomes policy; Recommends the proportions of income growth which shall be utilised for general wage increase; Informs the Federal Government of current and incipient trends in wages and proposes guidelines within which increase in wages shall be confined;

HURIWA which insisted that there was no lawful need for another illegal contraption in the name of a committee on salaries just put up to gulp public funds because the existing frameworks setting up the National Salaries, incomes and wages commission saddle the Agency with the additional functions of: to Keeps the Federal Government informed on a continuous basis of movement of all forms of income and propose guidelines relating to profits, dividends and all incomes other than wages; Encourages research on wage structure (including industrial, occupational and regional and any other similar factor), income distribution and household consumption patterns; Keeps prices under continuous surveillance, interprets price movements and relates

them to other developments in the national economy; Proposes measures for the regulation of prices and wages in the various sectors of the economy and for the control of hoarding.

Other functions are: to Encourages and promotes schemes for raising productivity in all sectors of the economy; Establishes and runs a data bank or other information center relating to data on wages and prices or any other variable and for that purpose to collaborate with data collection agencies to design and develop an adequate information system; informs and educates the public on prices, wages and productivity, their relationships with one another and their inter-play in determining standards of living and real economic growth; and amongst others to: Examines and advises on any matter referred to it by the Federal and State Governments concerning any of the functions conferred on it by or pursuant to the Act; Examines areas in which rationalisation and harmonisation of wages, salaries and other conditions of employment are desirable and feasible as between the public and private sectors of the economy and recommends guidelines which will ensure sustained harmony in work compensation policies in both the public and private sectors. But HURIWA lamented that even when there was no need for constituting another wage negotiations committee since there is a body in existence that is recognized by law for such functions and is being maintained with taxpayers money, the government through the Vice President Kashim Shettima had on January 30, 2024 inaugurated the Tripartite Committee on New National Minimum Wage at the Council Chamber of the Presidential Villa, Abuja. HURIWA describes this move as regrettable and unfortunate.

A letter dated 18th January 2024, addressed to President Tinubu with the title, 'Request For Approval Of Funds And Inauguration of the Tripartite Committee On National Minimum Wage,' reads in parts: "This memorandum seeks your approval of the following in respect of the above subject matter: The release of the sum of One Billion Naira only for the above exercise. This has been scaled down from N1.8 billion." "...The 26th January 2024 for the inauguration of the Committee. All relevant documents are hereby attached. "The New Minimum Wage is expected to be ready by 1st April 2024 according to Law." It was, however, reported that a handwritten response from the president instructed the committee to cut down its budget by 50 percent and start with the approved sum of N500m. HURIWA which criticised the establishment of a wasteful committee on wage negotiations, has however demanded public explanation to Nigerians by the Federal Government why it decided to waste public funds amidst hunger when there is a body that ought to handle wage negotiations in Nigeria just as the Rights group has asked that the committee be compelled to refund the N500 million to the Treasury Single Account and for the President to allow the National Salaries, incomes and wages commission to handle that task since that is their fundamental statutory mandate.

# ABANDONING CORPERS IN THE HANDS OF KIDNAPPERS TELLS A STORY OF A FAILED STATE: HURIWA

Leading Civil Rights Advocacy group: HUMAN RIGHTS WRITERS ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (HURIWA) has condemned the inability and blatant failure of the Federal government to secure the release of some of the 8 mobilized Corpers kidnapped by terrorists in Zamfara on their way to National Youth Service Corp camp from Akwa Ibom State since five months ago.

"The only way to describe what is happening right now under the administration of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu in which youngsters mobilised by the Nigerian State from their native state of Akwa Ibom to go to Zamfara State in the North West only to be kidnapped by terrorists and for 5 months this same Nigerian state simply forgot these youngsters in the deep forests with terrorists is to say that Nigeria is not just sick but has failed".

"It is now a commonplace knowledge that whenever a citizen becomes a victim of organised sophisticated crime such as terrorism and kidnappings for ransom, the majority of observers of such a scenario would say that 'Nigeria has happened' to the person and to us in HURIWA, this phrase unfortunate as it is, represents the state of heightened insecurity in Nigeria in which government that ought to exercise the right

to use controlled violence, and whose primary constitutional duty is to secure lives of the citizens, has been overwhelmed by armed non state actors". "That the present administration would just shut her eyes on these NYSC corpers and let their parents and kidnapers to be negotiating for ransom and to let these Nigerians stay in the lawless Zamfara forests for 5 months and yet the Inspector-General of Police who is statutorily responsible for internal security hasn't been queried by President Tinubu shows that this government attaches no importance to the lives of commoners. This is a crime against humanity." In December 4 when it barely four months after the eight graduates abducted on their way to the NYSC orientation camp in Sokoto State had yet to be released, about two of them gained freedom apparently after paying ransom but the remaining corpers have been abandoned by government of Nigeria. The fresh graduates, it was gathered, were abducted by the gunmen on August 17, on a highway in Zamfara State. The prospective corps members were travelling in an AKTC bus to Sokoto State for the mandatory youth service programme for Nigerian graduates. Sadly, the federal governments, Akwa



Ibom and Zamfara states' governments, have failed to act so as to rescue these youngsters apparently because of the poor status of their parents back in Akwa Ibom.

But in the statement issued around the first week of last December after 4 months in captivity, the NYSC management said it had secured the release of just two of the abducted prospective corps members. According to the publicity Director Mr. EDDY Megwa, this means that four of the eight PCMs and the driver who was kidnapped would have been released. The statement partly read, "The Nigerian Army recently secured the release of male and female abductees, while efforts are seriously ongoing to ensure the safe release of the remaining four Prospective Corps Members."

It added that the NYSC Director-General, Brig.-Gen. Yush'au Ahmed, "hereby reassures the public, especially the parents of the remaining four abductees that the scheme, in conjunction with security agencies, will explore every available strategy to ensure their release unhurt and reunite them with their families.

"NYSC management also wishes to appreciate the overwhelming support received from the Nigerian Army in its concerted efforts

towards securing the release of the abducted prospective corps members," Megwa added.

He, Mr. Megwa of NYSC reiterated the scheme's dedication to fulfilling its mandate under the law to advance national unity and integration.

HURIWA however said that in as much as the NYSC management has no control over the security of the nation, the NYSC should as a policy, stop posting corpers to all the North West states aside Kano State until the security situation improves since the Federal government is not prepared to do whatever that is required to rescue corpers when kidnapped apparently because most of these youngsters are children from poor households.

HURIWA is also for the umpteenth time condemning the fact that heads of security institutions are not being required to be accountable and responsible for the wanton security breaches all over the country which goes to show that Nigeria is a failed state because a functional Sovereignty wouldn't let her youngsters stay in the forests for 5 months with terrorists and yet the Inspector-General of Police has not been sanctioned by President Tinubu for his apparent gross dereliction of duty.