

# RE: MATAWALLE'S ADMINISTRATION EMBEZZLED BILLIONS OF NAIRA FROM ABANDONED ZAMFARA CARGO AIRPORT

**I**n response to the malicious press statement released by Governor Dauda Lawal's administration regarding the alleged embezzlement of billions of Naira from the Zamfara Cargo Airport project during the previous administration of His Excellency (Dr) Bello Matawalle, it is pertinent to make the following salient points for the public to know. For transparency and accountability, it is essential for any government to investigate and rectify any financial irregularities that might have occurred during previous administrations, but Dauda Lawal's administration is only poised and qualified as a faultfinder even where there is none. He only chooses the path of grumbling and witch-hunt against the person of his predecessor Dr. Bello Matawalle who is far ahead of him in all ramifications. This is what is called jealousy and treachery and not transparency or accountability.

What that shabby and scruffy statement is reaffirming is the same story of blame game and abscondment from primary-responsibilities ventilated in an article by one Suleiman Abba published in Active News Africa on the 27th September 2023 titled “Zamfara: When a Governor abdicates his responsibilities”. “An accurate personification of crass political opportunism is when the Governor of Zamfara State, Dauda Lawal chose to abdicate his primary responsibilities and absconded on the very day the campus of the Federal University Gusau was brutally attacked and dozens of female students abducted”. Abba pointed out. Dauda Lawal needs to know that public interest supercedes any other interest in governance. It is, therefore, important to remind him that the ultimate goal of any government project is to serve the public interest and not resort to unfounded allegations. Is this unfounded allegation what the people of Zamfara want to hear when they are in a serious security quagmire? Only recently, many unsuspecting residents in different parts of the state have been kidnapped, specifically in Kaura, Sakajiki, and Gusau, to mention a few. The Zamfara state people and the public expected Dauda to be up and doing, but he doesn't even have the time to stay in the state for a complete five working days.

Abba further said “another suspicious development is that for the last six days since the incident (kidnap of FUGUS students - emphasis mine) and Dauda's abdication, the federal government and federal security agencies have been making efforts to link up with the Zamfara government, but they avoided their moves. For instance, the Defence Minister and other Defence Chiefs have variously called the Deputy Governor in the absence of his principal, but he declined all the calls”. On the issue of Independent Evaluation in the malicious press statement, it mentions evaluations that were carried out by four different independent firms of experts and relevant agencies. We challenge Dauda to provide the actual detailed reports of these evaluations to ensure that the claims he is making are substantiated with evidence.

Turning to the issue of discrepancies between the contract bills of quantities and engineering, architectural designs, and specifications where he talked about contract award and execution, that is a completely unfounded allegation targeted at tarnishing the image of Dr. Bello Matawalle. This undermines the importance of proper oversight and adherence to regulatory procedures, which the government of Matawalle adhered to in issues relating to contracts. As a seasoned Banker, it is unfortunate that Dauda failed to pay attention to the details contained in the over 480-page report of the 2023 Transition Committee, which is a compendium of all relevant information required concerning the previous administration.

Similarly, another instance that shows that Dauda is only playing politics to bury his ineptitude was the recent allegation that he labeled against Islamic Scholars in the state, which they later refuted and tackled him head-on. The Scholars admitted that Dauda is ignorant of a lot of things about the state as a result of the fact that he does not stay in the state to understand how things go. Coming to contractor responsibility, the contractors have not been found to be at fault, but the statement held that there was financial mismanagement or non-compliance with project requirements without any backing evidence. Why is Dauda afraid to follow the appropriate channels of addressing contractual issues before he jumps into conclusions, perhaps because he wants to re-award the contract to another contractor. Whatever, we take this opportunity to challenge Dauda to provide evidence of mismanagement of funds associated with the said contract as he alleged.

*Lawal Umar Maradun, fnipr, arpa Is former PPS to the immediate past Executive Governor of Zamfara State  
Hon. (Dr.) Bello Mohammed Matawallen Maradun, the Honourable Minister State, Defence*