

EFCC sacks over 40 staff for corruption, prosecutes 5 others

The Chairman, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Mr Ola Olukoyede, says more than 40 staff members have been dismissed for corruption and financial malpractice in the last three years. Olukoyede disclosed this in Abuja at a media interactive session to mark his three-year stewardship at the commission's headquarters. The chairman also said that about five of the commission's staff are currently being prosecuted for corrupt practices. "In the past two and a half to three years of my service, I have asked them to dismiss over 40 staff on account of corruption and financial malpractice. More than five of them are being prosecuted at the moment," he said. The EFCC chairman said some of the affected staff members are already being prosecuted, while case files involving others are being prepared for prosecution. "You can follow those cases in court; they are public knowledge. 'If that is what people do in other agencies and I arrest them, I investigate them, I prosecute them, why must I just dismiss you if you do it within our own system and I'm not prosecuting you?'" he asked. Olukoyede said the disciplinary measures were part of efforts to ensure EFCC personnel were held to the same standards of accountability the agency demanded from other Nigerians. "You must be sure that your hands are clean. You can't be fighting corruption when your hands are soiled with corrupt practices," he said.

The EFCC chairman also announced the renaming of the commission's former Internal Affairs Department to the Department of Ethics and Integrity as part of its drive for "internal cleansing." He said the commission had also introduced a gift policy to strengthen transparency and prevent conflicts of interest. According to him, under the policy, staff will be required to declare gifts above a specified value, including those received from friends and relatives at home and abroad. "The commission will also define the categories of gifts personnel can accept and require officers to account for their sources of income and standard of living," he added. The chairman called for stronger institutional reforms and policy changes to fight corruption, saying law enforcement alone could not win the war. "The most effective system that fights financial crime is not law enforcement. It is the policy regime, institutional reforms that close leakages," he said. He urged the media and civil society to return to their watchdog roles.

Terrorists exploit dead persons' accounts, crowdfunding to move funds — NFIU

The Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit has uncovered sophisticated methods allegedly being used by terrorist financiers to raise, move and conceal funds, including crowdfunding campaigns, proxy bank accounts and mobile numbers registered to deceased persons. The findings were contained in the NFIU's 2025 Annual Report, which detailed emerging terrorist financing techniques involving social media, remittance platforms, fintech services and the banking system. According to the report, foreign-based facilitators are increasingly using social media to solicit donations under the guise of humanitarian assistance or educational support before transferring the funds to terrorist networks operating in Nigeria. The NFIU said the facilitators typically encourage hundreds of sympathizers to make relatively small contributions, ranging

from \$50 to \$500, through PayPal pages or conventional bank accounts. The relatively low value of individual donations, it noted, could enable the transactions to escape automated anti-money laundering alerts. The funds are subsequently consolidated into a master account controlled by a senior member of the network based abroad. Once the accumulated funds reach a predetermined threshold, the money is divided into numerous smaller transfers and sent through international money transfer operators and remittance applications to money mules in Nigeria.

The NFIU identified students, small-business owners and relatives among individuals allegedly used as intermediaries. Upon receiving the funds, the mules may convert them into cash or use them to purchase items that could serve both civilian and terrorist purposes, including motorcycles, fertilizers and satellite internet equipment. The money may also be transferred through mobile banking channels to logistics coordinators and field operatives, according to the report. The agency said the process ultimately enables terrorist groups to integrate funds raised through seemingly legitimate activities into their operational financing networks.

Women's accounts used as proxies. The NFIU also identified the use of women's bank accounts as another emerging method of disguising terrorist financing. It said male commanders and logistics managers sometimes secretly control accounts opened in the names of wives, sisters or other female associates. According to the agency, the tactic exploits the assumption that women may be less likely to attract suspicion during financial investigations. The report described the practice as "identity laundering," noting that male operators may possess the ATM cards, mobile banking credentials and PINs associated with accounts belonging to women. In some cases, the account holders may allegedly be unaware of the nature or scale of transactions conducted through their accounts. The NFIU further disclosed that terrorist facilitators were using telephone numbers that were not registered to the account holders or actual beneficiaries for mobile banking and transaction alerts. It said some networks were using pre-registered SIM cards; numbers registered to deceased persons and SIM cards associated with proxy account holders. According to the agency, the practice can make it difficult for investigators to establish the real identity of individuals controlling accounts and moving funds.

The financial intelligence agency also identified the use of detailed or coded transaction narrations to conceal terrorist-related payments.

It said terrorist cells, particularly those linked to the Islamic State West Africa Province, sometimes use professional-looking transaction descriptions as part of an internal financial accounting system. The NFIU said analysts had observed frequent logistics-related payments from a single source to multiple recipients, accompanied by detailed narrations. However, it noted that other facilitators deliberately use seemingly harmless words, secret codes and alphanumeric combinations to conceal the purpose of transactions. Some allegedly switch between languages to evade automated banking systems designed to flag suspicious keywords associated with terrorism and other criminal activities. The agency said these methods demonstrate the growing sophistication of terrorist financing networks and the need for financial institutions and security agencies to constantly adapt their monitoring systems. Beyond terrorism financing, the NFIU said financial fraud remained one of the major predicate offences identified during its analysis of suspicious financial activities in 2025.

It highlighted the growth of Ponzi schemes, fraudulent crowdfunding operations, cryptocurrency investment scams and hacking-related fraud, including the compromise of social media and messaging accounts. The agency said criminal networks were increasingly exploiting weaknesses in fintech onboarding processes, including accounts with minimal identification requirements, to recruit victims and rapidly move illicit funds. The report also identified corruption and the diversion of public funds as continuing financial risks. According to the NFIU, state and local government funds were sometimes diverted through accounts belonging to finance officers and third parties, while procurement processes remained particularly vulnerable to financial abuse. The agency added that extensive use of cash transactions continued to complicate financial audits and the tracing of illicit assets. The NFIU said its analysis of emerging financial threats had informed targeted advisories, executive alerts and intelligence products provided to relevant authorities and reporting entities to support investigations and policy responses.

Our central objective is to develop a Nigerian Defense Industry that is capable of meeting the requirements of our Armed Forces, ... Matawalle

The Federal Government of Nigeria has reaffirmed its commitment to developing a strong, self-reliant and capable defence industry that can effectively meet the requirements of the Armed Forces while contributing to national industrialization and economic development agenda of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. The Honourable Minister of State for Defence, Dr. Bello Matawalle, stated this on Wednesday in Abuja at the 7th Nigeria–Turkey Defence Industries Cooperation Meeting (DICM). HM Matawalle emphasized that Nigeria's objective is not only to strengthen the operational capacity of the Armed Forces but also to establish a sustainable defence-industrial ecosystem capable of delivering critical military equipment, technologies and services locally. According to the Minister, this ambition is strongly supported by the DICON Act 2023, which provides a significant legislative framework for expanding local defence production, promoting private-sector participation and facilitating strategic partnerships. He, however, stressed that the real value of the policy and legislative framework would be realized only when it is translated into tangible industrial capacity, technological capability and sustainable local production. “Our central objective is to develop a defence industry that is increasingly capable of meeting the requirements of our Armed Forces, while contributing to national industrial and economic development. “This ambition is supported by the DICON Act 2023, which provides an important framework for strengthening local production, encouraging private-sector participation and facilitating strategic partnerships.

However, the real opportunity lies in translating this policy and legislative framework into actual industrial capability. That is why this Forum is particularly important.” The Honourable Minister therefore called on the Nigerian and Turkish sides to move beyond broad commitments and explore practical and sustainable models of cooperation, particularly in the areas of joint production, technology licensing, co-development, skills transfer and localization of defense manufacturing capabilities.

He noted that such partnerships would not only strengthen Nigeria's defence preparedness but also support technology transfer, human-capital development, job creation and broader industrial and economic growth. Minister Matawalle further expressed the Federal Government's readiness to deepen and expand defence-industrial cooperation with Türkiye, stressing that Nigeria looks forward to a new phase of mutually beneficial collaboration that delivers concrete results for both countries. In his remarks, the Turkish Defence Industry Delegation Lead and Vice President of the Presidency of Defence Industries (SSB), Gökhan Uçar, highlighted the longstanding defence relationship between Nigeria and Türkiye, noting that both countries have maintained strong ties over the years. Mr. Uçar expressed optimism that the relationship would continue to grow, particularly in the area of defence-industrial cooperation, while identifying the sector as an important platform for deepening defence cooperation and technological relations.

He stated that the Turkish Government remains committed to strengthening defence-industrial cooperation with Nigeria, adding that a number of Turkish companies are already operating in Nigeria, while several Turkish investors are equally interested in exploring new opportunities for partnership and investment in the country. Earlier, the Honourable Minister of Defence, Gen. Christopher G. Musa, OFR, Rtd, appreciated the Turkish Defence Industry Delegation for its readiness to partner with Nigeria and formally declared the meeting open. The event brought together senior government officials, defence-industry stakeholders, investors and representatives of the Nigerian and Turkish business communities. Among senior officials and dignitaries in attendance were the Turkish Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Mehmet Poroy, representative of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Defence, Mrs. B.O Olaniyi, the Director-General, Defence Industries Cooperation of Nigeria (DICON) Brigadier General, B.I Alaya, senior Nigerian and Turkish defence-industry representatives, as well as prospective investors and other key stakeholders. The 7th Nigeria–Turkey Defence Industries Cooperation Meeting provides an important platform for both Nigeria and Turkey to strengthen existing partnerships, identify new areas of cooperation and translate shared commitments into practical defence-industrial initiatives that advance Nigeria's quest for greater self-reliance, technological capability and sustainable national development.

Kidnapping victims rise 66% as Nigerians pay N7.8bn ransom — Report

At least 1,142 people were killed in 1,713 kidnapping and related incidents across Nigeria between July 2025 and June 2026, while victims and their families paid about N7.8 billion in ransom, according to a new report by SBM Intelligence. The report, titled The Capture of the Kidnap Economy, said 7,825 people were abducted during the 12-month period, representing a 66 per cent increase in the number of victims compared with the previous reporting cycle. It also recorded 895 civilian deaths among the incidents analyzed, contributing to the overall figure of 1,142 people killed. Despite a decline in the amount of ransom demanded, the report found that actual payments increased sharply during the period under review. According to SBM Intelligence, ransom demands fell from N48 billion in the previous cycle to N22.9 billion, while actual payments more than tripled from N2.56 billion to N7.78 billion. The report attributed about 90 per cent of the ransom paid

to the Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad (JAS) faction of Boko Haram, which reportedly collected N7 billion from just eight incidents. Two major mass abductions accounted for most of the payment. They included the abduction of 416 people in Ngoshe, Borno State, for which N5 billion was reportedly paid, and the kidnapping of 315 pupils and staff of St Mary's School in Papiri, Niger State, which attracted a N2 billion ransom.

"Two abductions drove the year's total: the N5 billion ransom for 416 captives taken from Ngoshe, Borno, and the N2 billion paid for 315 pupils and staff abducted from St Mary's School in Papiri, Niger," the report stated. The Northwest emerged as the worst-hit region, recording the highest number of kidnapping incidents, victims and deaths. Zamfara alone accounted for 236 incidents involving 1,921 victims, while the North as a whole accounted for 93.7 per cent of all reported abductions. The South accounted for the remaining 6.3 per cent. Mass abduction was identified as the most common method used by kidnappers. Zamfara recorded 92 such incidents, followed by Sokoto with 76. The report also raised concerns over the resurgence of school kidnappings, warning that the impact extends beyond the immediate victims to education, farming activities and public confidence. It noted that paying ransom did not always guarantee the safe release of victims, as at least six cases involved victims being killed despite ransom payments. In some cases, kidnappers also targeted relatives or individuals involved in ransom negotiations, while 14 incidents involved demands for items such as motorcycles, mobile phones, food, fuel and other goods instead of cash. SBM Intelligence observed that although bandits and criminal gangs accounted for most kidnapping incidents, a single Boko Haram faction dominated the ransom economy because of its ability to secure large payments from a small number of high-value abductions. The report said bandits and criminal gangs collectively demanded about N13.5 billion but received only N719 million, representing a collection rate of 5.3 per cent. By comparison, the JAS faction reportedly demanded N9.2 billion and received N7 billion, representing a 76 per cent collection rate. The research organization called for measures to disrupt the financial networks sustaining kidnapping and insurgency, alongside efforts to address the economic conditions that provide recruits for criminal groups. It warned that failure to tackle both the profitability and underlying causes of kidnapping could turn the crime into a more entrenched source of funding for groups threatening Nigeria's security.

Nigeria's bloodshed has reached an intolerable crest" — Catholic Bishops demand end to killings, kidnappings nationwide -

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria has raised fresh alarm over the continuing killings, kidnappings and displacement of citizens across the country, declaring that Nigeria's security crisis has reached what it described as an "intolerable crest." The bishops called on the Federal, government, state governments, security agencies and political leaders to intensify efforts to protect lives and dismantle criminal networks before they carry out further attacks. The position was contained in a statement titled, "Stop the Slaughter in Borgu and Ukum, Stop the Killings In Nigeria," signed by the President of the CBCN and Archbishop of Kaduna Diocese, Most Rev. Matthew Man-Oso Ndagoso.

The statement followed reports of the abduction of more than 60 worshippers from a mosque in Borgu, Niger State, and the killing of 47 people in Ukum, Benue State, where another 17 persons were reportedly critically injured. "With heavy hearts and deep sorrow, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria once again decries the unabated trail of blood and terror across our nation which has reached an intolerable crest," the bishops said. They expressed concern that Nigerians were increasingly vulnerable to attacks regardless of whether they were in their homes, marketplaces or places of worship. Expressing solidarity with the Muslim community following the reported Borgu abductions, the bishops called for the immediate and safe release of the worshippers. "We stand in firm solidarity with our Muslim brothers and sisters in Niger State, and all over Nigeria, praying for the immediate and safe release of all 60 abducted worshippers," the statement said. "An attack on any place of worship is an attack on our collective humanity." The bishops said the continuing attacks across different parts of the country required more than responses after violence had occurred, urging security agencies to adopt proactive, intelligence-driven operations capable of identifying and dismantling criminal networks before attacks are launched. They acknowledged efforts already being made by authorities but insisted that government could not relent until the security and welfare of Nigerians were effectively guaranteed. "The tears of bereaved families in Niger, Benue, and across every geopolitical zone in Nigeria must worry you enough to do everything possible to stop this carnage in our land," they said. The CBCN specifically urged authorities to "deploy proactive, intelligence-led security to neutralize criminal hubs before they strike."

It also demanded the speedy investigation and prosecution of persons responsible for killings and kidnappings, including those alleged to be financing or otherwise supporting criminal groups. "Bring perpetrators and their sponsors, regardless of their status or affiliations, to justice swiftly, as impunity fuels repetition," the bishops said. The Catholic leaders equally addressed those carrying out the attacks directly, appealing to bandits, terrorists, kidnappers and their alleged sponsors to abandon violence. "To the bandits, terrorists, kidnappers, and their sponsors, we plead that you stop the bloodshed!" they said. "Human life belongs to God alone, and no cause justifies this cruelty." Their intervention comes amid reports of another wave of attacks in Plateau State, particularly communities in Mangu and Riyom Local Government Areas. At least 25 persons were reported killed in an overnight attack in Plateau on August 18, while other accounts placed the casualty figure from the attack on Bin-Per community in Mangu at between 26 and 28. Houses and farmlands were also reportedly destroyed. On August 24, two security operatives were also reportedly killed and their rifles taken following an attack by gunmen on communities in Riyom Local Government Area. Earlier attacks on Berom communities in the state reportedly left two persons dead, another injured and several houses burnt. The Federal Ministry of Information had separately reported that at least 23 people were killed during an August 17 attack on Jwak Maitumbi community in Mangu, with about 45 residential shelters reportedly destroyed. Against the backdrop of the recurring attacks, the bishops said Nigeria needed a security strategy focused on preventing violence rather than merely reacting after lives had been lost. "To those in government at all levels, security chiefs, and political leaders, while we commend some efforts being made, we urge that you do not give up on this responsibility until the security and welfare for the citizens are guaranteed," they said.

The bishops also urged Nigerians not to surrender to despair despite the security challenges, calling for continued prayers for peace and security. “Finally, we urge all Nigerians never to lose hope in Nigeria, but to remain steadfast in prayer for peace, security, and divine intervention in our land,” the statement said. They prayed for the families of those killed, speedy recovery for the injured and the safe return of those abducted. “May the God of peace restore order to our nation, comfort those who mourn, and touch the hearts of those who inflict pain,” the bishops concluded.

₦27.5tr Budget: Nigeria Tracks Spending, Not Results — Athena Centre

Nigeria's public finance system has become increasingly effective at tracking government expenditure but remains poorly equipped to determine whether billions of naira spent annually are actually improving citizens' lives, the Athena Centre for Policy and Leadership has warned. The warning is contained in the latest edition of the Athena Policy Pulse, titled “Beyond Transparency: Building Results Accountability in Nigeria's Public Finance System,” authored by Izuchukwu Anyanwu and Chinaza Igwe. The report argues that the central challenge confronting Nigeria's public-finance system is no longer simply how much government spends, but whether public expenditure produces verifiable and sustained public value. According to the report, Nigeria's 2026 Federal Budget stands at ₦27.5 trillion, while about 41.6 per cent of federally retained revenue was consumed by debt servicing in 2025. It noted that under the 2024–2026 Medium-Term Expenditure Framework, more than ₦5.9 trillion was allocated to health, ₦7.4 trillion to education, over ₦10 trillion to infrastructure and approximately ₦5.8 trillion to defence and security. Yet, the Centre said, increased financial allocations have not consistently translated into corresponding improvements in healthcare access, learning outcomes, transport efficiency or security conditions. “The question is no longer whether government is spending, but whether public spending produces verifiable, sustained public value,” the report argues. It identified the weakness as an institutional problem rather than merely a fiscal one, pointing to the continued dominance of input-based budgeting, weak links between previous performance and new appropriations, and incentives for ministries, departments and agencies to demonstrate budget execution rather than measurable results. The report also faulted the disconnect between financial management systems and sectoral performance data, while noting that auditing remains largely focused on compliance rather than determining whether public resources delivered value for money. The Centre therefore insisted that Nigeria has built what it described as a “transparency architecture without building a results-accountability architecture.”

To address the gap, the report proposed four major institutional reforms. It called for the publication of a results annex alongside the annual Appropriation Bill, with programme allocations linked directly to measurable outcomes. It also recommended that ministries, departments and agencies be required to submit ex-post-performance briefs before new capital projects are approved within the MTEF cycle. The Centre further urged the expansion of value-for-money audits, with findings incorporated into subsequent budget preparation. It also proposed upgrading the Government Integrated Financial

Management Information System (GIFMIS) so that it can interface with sectoral outcome systems and evolve from primarily a transaction-recording platform into a broader results-accountability mechanism. The report identified the 2027–2029 MTEF as a critical opportunity for Nigeria to change the way public expenditure is planned and assessed. It said embedding performance information into budgeting, appropriation and auditing would determine whether the country's public-finance system becomes a genuine instrument for delivering public value or remains largely focused on expenditure management. The Athena Centre's findings come against the backdrop of persistent public concern over the relationship between Nigeria's expanding budgets and the quality of services delivered to citizens.

2027: IGP warns politicians against using youths for electoral violence

The Inspector-General of Police, Olukayode Egbetokun, has warned politicians against recruiting, arming, financing or inciting Nigerian youths to perpetrate violence ahead of the 2027 general elections. Egbetokun issued the warning on Thursday at the National Youth Leadership and Security Dialogue organized by the Nigeria Police Force to mark International Youth Day 2026. He urged political leaders across party lines not to use young Nigerians to advance their political interests, warning that the consequences of electoral violence would be borne by the youths long after politicians had settled their differences. “I therefore appeal to political leaders and actors across the political spectrum: do not recruit our young people to fight your political battles. Do not arm them. Do not finance violence. Do not incite them against their fellow citizens. Do not encourage them to commit crimes today and promise to protect them tomorrow,” he said. The police chief said the warning was particularly important as the country approaches the 2027 electoral cycle. According to him, politicians could reconcile after elections, but victims of political violence who lose their lives would not have the opportunity to benefit from such reconciliation. “Politicians contest elections, but you live with the consequences of those elections. When the campaign is over, political actors may reconcile. When political rivals disagree, they may eventually shake hands. But the young Nigerian who loses his or her life to electoral violence does not return home,” he said. Egbetokun assured Nigerians that the police would protect their constitutional rights to participate in political activities, support political parties and campaign for candidates, provided such activities remained peaceful and lawful.

He, however, warned that the police would not allow political activities to be used as a cover for criminal conduct. “We will not protect violence. We will not tolerate the recruitment or mobilization of young Nigerians for political violence. We will not tolerate the possession or use of weapons for electoral purposes, attacks on political opponents, intimidation of voters, destruction of public or private property, or any other criminal conduct disguised as political participation,” he said. He stressed that anyone who violated the law would face the consequences regardless of political affiliation. The IGP also drew attention to the growing role of digital platforms in political conflicts, warning that electoral violence could now be triggered or amplified online. He listed misinformation, disinformation, hate speech, cyberbullying, impersonation, deepfakes, online

intimidation and coordinated digital attacks among the emerging threats to Nigeria's democratic process. According to him, such activities could damage reputations, inflame communities, trigger physical violence and undermine public confidence in democratic institutions. Egbetokun therefore urged young Nigerians to verify information before sharing it and consider the potential consequences of their online activities. "Before you forward a message, verify it. Before you publish an allegation, establish the facts. Before you attack someone online, remember that there is a human being behind the screen," he said. He called on youths to participate actively in the democratic process without allowing themselves to be used for violence, misinformation or online intimidation. "Do not allow yourself to be recruited for violence. Do not carry a weapon for anybody's political ambition. Do not become an instrument of misinformation, hate or digital intimidation. Participate actively, peacefully and lawfully in our democracy," Egbetokun said. The IGP said the police would continue to work with young Nigerians to prevent violence, combat cybercrime, promote responsible digital citizenship and encourage peaceful participation in elections. He added that maintaining security was a collective responsibility involving law enforcement agencies, government, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders.

Fuel price hike: You can't remain silent while Nigerians suffer, NLC tells Tinubu

The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) has urged President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to take immediate measures to cushion Nigerians from the latest surge in petrol pump prices, warning that the government cannot afford to remain passive while rising fuel costs deepen hardship across the country. The NLC said the price of petrol had risen to about N1,430 per litre in major urban centres where the product was readily available, with prices reportedly higher in less accessible areas.

In a statement, the NLC President, Comrade Joe Ajaero, said the development had inflicted "incalculable damage" on workers' wages and the general living conditions of Nigerians. "We are seriously concerned by the rising cost of the pump price of petrol across the country. In mega urban cities where petrol is readily available, the cost ranges from N1,430. In less accessible areas, the cost is much worse. "This has inflicted incalculable damage to not only wages but our state of being as a people and as a nation," Ajaero said. He warned that the increase in transportation costs would continue to drive up the prices of essential goods and services, further eroding household incomes. "It is an established fact that when transportation costs go up, everything else follows, including school fees, rents, tariffs, foodstuffs, etc. "These new costs continue to inflict or deepen poverty among the populace, stressing the quality of life to the limits," he said. According to the NLC, the latest increase had come at a time when government pressure on petroleum marketers to reduce pump prices in line with crude oil prices in the international spot market was beginning to yield results. The union, however, acknowledged that the latest pressure on domestic fuel prices was linked to the resurgence of conflict in the Gulf, but argued that Nigeria should be better positioned to protect its citizens from such external shocks. "Yet, even as this new wave of costs is caused by the resurgence of the conflict in the Gulf, our situation needs not be this bleak," Ajaero said. He

argued that Nigeria's status as an oil-producing country, coupled with its local refining capacity, provided an opportunity for the government to create a buffer against international oil-market disruptions. "Coupled with the fact that we are an oil-producing country, we have sufficient local refining capacity, even as this substantially resides with the private sector. "As a nation, and as a people endowed with enormous fossil resources, we are deserving of a certain level of protection or buffer against the gales from the Gulf, and indeed, other gales," he said. To achieve this, the NLC called on the Federal Government to introduce immediate wage awards for workers, increase crude oil supplies to domestic refineries through naira transactions and expand national fuel storage capacity. "As part of the process of creating this buffer, we urge the government to immediately give reasonable wage awards to workers; sell sufficient crude in Naira to our local refineries; expand our national storage capacity in pursuance of meeting energy emergencies and security," Ajaero said. He added that the proposed measures would have wider economic and security benefits. "These measures will create jobs, economic value as well as deal with mutating security challenges," he said.

The NLC also argued that government intervention to cushion citizens from the current crisis should not be ruled out on the grounds of deregulation. "There is nothing wrong with government subsidizing the needs of citizens, especially in emergency situations like this," Ajaero said. He maintained that oil-producing countries had a responsibility to protect their citizens against severe economic shocks, adding that other countries were already taking measures to cushion their populations. "At the moment, there is no oil-producing country we know of that has not intervened or come up with sustainable palliatives in one way or the other in these perilous times," he said.

The labor centre further pointed to what it described as additional revenue accruing to the Federal Government from international crude oil prices above the budget benchmark. Ajaero said government was currently making between \$35 and \$40 per barrel above the budgeted figure in the international spot market, which he said translated into "trillions of Naira a month." "These measures are all the more necessary and urgent because government is making extra money in the international spot market (of between USD35 and 40 per barrel above the budgeted figure). This translates to trillions of Naira a month," he said. "Government ought to be satisfied with this as it is a windfall." On local refining, the NLC expressed concern that domestic refineries were still importing crude oil, describing the situation as inconsistent with the objective of developing local refining capacity. "On a long-term basis, we are equally concerned that local refineries are importing crude. This is unreasonable and unacceptable and defeats the logic and purpose of local capacity," Ajaero said. The union therefore urged the Federal Government to prioritize adequate crude supply to local refineries as part of measures to reduce Nigeria's vulnerability to international oil-market disruptions. The NLC also warned that government could not afford to ignore the hardship caused by rising fuel prices under the banner of deregulation, particularly as the administration approaches the next general elections. "We are of the view that a government that seeks re-election in the next few months cannot afford to stand and watch marketers inflict suffering on the citizenry in the name of deregulation," Ajaero said. "Labour has an obligation to speak out or act accordingly."