

Diaspora Organisation Challenges Nigeria Judiciary

Diaspora Action for Democracy in Africa (DADA), has reacted to the judgment delivered by the Presidential Election Petition Tribunal (PEPT) on Wednesday September 6, 2023 by calling on the judiciary to uphold the constitution. DADA in a statement signed by Mr Uche Martin noted that the decision of the Appeal Court to uphold the result of the 2023 Presidential election has disappointed many Nigerians. The Africans in diaspora-based organisation said that reports of glaring irregularities and non-conformity to the 2022 Electoral Act by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is regrettable and deeply troubling. DADA referred particularly to a damning EU report about the Nigeria 2023 elections. The group however expressed confidence that the Nigeria Supreme Court will uphold Nigeria's constitution with regards to the several issues raised at the Tribunal. The group further said available reports indicate that the court did not base its decision on points of Law but rather lends credence to widespread suspicion that the Judges have been compromised or coerced. This development have dashed hope of millions of Nigerians who believed in the Independence of Judiciary. It further noted that this is a watershed moment in the country's history where the popular notion that the judiciary is the last hope of the common man appears more of a myth than reality. The group urged the apex court to restore the hope of Nigerians in the Judiciary by dispensing justice fairly and without bias, guided by the Constitution and based on merits of the cases presented, and not employing superfluous technicalities that undermine true justice. "This decision of PEPT has deflated the morale of millions of Nigerians who cast their votes in the hope of obtaining the good governance the country desperately needs to emerge from the hardship and suffering the masses are experiencing", the group stated. "It is our hope that the PEPT judgment will be carefully reviewed at the Supreme Court, and the apex court will be strong defenders of the Constitution and issue an objective and fair judgment, without bias or favour, based on the evidence presented before it. "We also appeal to all Nigerians to remain calm but vigilant as active citizens. "We have previously expressed concern at limitations placed on freedom of the Press, freedom of citizens to peaceful protest and other human rights violations. "The absence of these fundamental freedoms is signaling that democracy in the Nigerian State is in regression, a situation which should never be allowed to fester or be perpetuated by any means."

Why Nigeria's Refineries Will Never Work – Obasanjo

Former President Olusegun Obasanjo has asserted that Nigeria's four oil refineries, located in Warri, Port Harcourt, and Kaduna states, will never function if the government maintains control over them. In an interview with The Cable Online Newspaper, Obasanjo revealed that Shell Oil Development Company had declined his offer to operate the refineries. Obasanjo explained that despite his persistent requests, Shell's managing director at the time had provided four reasons why the company was unwilling to engage in running Nigeria's refineries, one of which was "excessive corruption in refineries." President Bola Tinubu had previously assured that the Port Harcourt petroleum refinery would resume operations by December 2023 after undergoing rehabilitation. In response to questions about the state of Nigeria's refineries during the interview, Obasanjo stated, "They will not work as long as the government is keeping hold of them." He recounted his attempts to hand over the refineries to Shell for operation during his presidency, but Shell had declined, citing various reasons, including their focus on upstream activities, the unattractiveness of the refineries as a business venture, and the pervasive corruption in the sector. Obasanjo also mentioned an unsuccessful attempt to sell two of the four refineries to businessmen Aliko Dangote and Femi Otedola. They had offered to purchase a 51 percent stake in the Port Harcourt and Kaduna refineries for \$761 million, but the sale was canceled by President Umaru Yar'Adua, and the refineries were returned to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). Regarding the power sector, Obasanjo commented on the persistent challenges and delays in achieving adequate electricity generation. He highlighted that despite ordering 42 turbines with the goal of reaching 10,000 megawatts of power by 2007 during his presidency, the sector still struggles to provide a consistent 4,000 megawatts since his departure from office. He emphasized the importance of addressing fundamental issues in the power sector for lasting improvements to occur.

UN releases US\$125m for humanitarian operations in Africa

UN relief Chief Martin Griffiths has released US\$125 million from the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to assist underfunded humanitarian operations in 14 countries across Africa, Asia, the Americas, and the Middle East. The 7 African countries listed are Burkina

Faso US\$9 million; Mali US\$8 million; Central African Republic US\$6.5 million; Mozambique US\$6.5 million; Uganda US\$6 million; Cameroon US\$6 million; and Malawi US\$4 million. Afghanistan is to get US\$20 million; Yemen US\$20 million; Myanmar, US\$9 million; Haiti US\$8 million; Venezuela US\$8 million; and Bangladesh US\$8 million and Occupied Palestinian Territories US\$6 million. The UN humanitarian affairs office (OCHA) which Griffiths leads, reported that in 2023, global funding requirements have surpassed US\$55 billion to support 250 million people affected by conflict, climate change, disease outbreaks, and other crises. Faced with these record needs, less than 30 per cent of the target funding goal has been received. "It is a cruel reality that in many humanitarian operations, aid agencies are scraping along with very little funding right at a time when people's needs compel them to scale up," Emergency Relief Coordinator, Griffiths, said. "Thanks to the generosity of a vast range of donors, we can count on CERF to fill some of the gaps. Lives are saved as a result. "But we need individual donors to step up as well – this is a fund by all and for all." The recent injection brings the emergency fund's total support to more than US\$270 million this year. This is the largest amount ever allocated to the highest number of countries, reflecting skyrocketing needs and the fact that regular donor funding is not keeping pace.

FG Suspends Nigeria Air Project

The Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, has ordered the suspension of the Nigeria Air project. Keyamo gave this directive during a tour of the international airports on Thursday in Lagos, where he was accompanied by the Managing Director of the Federal Airport Authority of Nigeria (FAAN), Kabir Yusuf Mohammed. Keyamo also put on hold all arrangements under his predecessor, Hadi Sirika, to enable proper audit of contracts in the aviation industry. He has also put a halt to the concession project, saying that he owes it to the federal government (FG) and Nigerians to give a honest assessment. The recently appointed minister of aviation further said the suspension will be in place until he briefs President Bola Ahmed Tinubu. "A few months after Nigeria Air was launched with so much fanfare, using a borrowed airplane, it is now suspended," Keyamo said. "I owe it to the government and Nigerians to provide a honest

assessment." The then acting Managing Director of Nigeria Air, Captain Dapo Olumide, had revealed that the plane unveiled on the last day of the Muhammadu Buhari administration in May was a chartered aircraft from Ethiopian Airlines. The launch was viewed by some Nigerians as a ruse. The plane that was unveiled was said to be over 10 years old and had been previously operated by Ethiopian and Malawi Airlines. Nigeria's Senate and House of Representatives Committees on Aviation had both labelled the launch of the Nigeria Air as a fraud. Keyamo also said that the old international terminal of Murtala Muhammed International Airport (MMIA) in Lagos would be shut by October 1, 2023 for renovation. He further gave a directive that all private hangars would be relocated to pave way for expansion of the new terminal. "The major complaints have been with the old terminal. That place is an eyesore to Nigerians coming in. The lifts are not working," Keyamo said. "The passage is unwelcoming and there is no air conditioner. We have the new terminal but cannot be used. It was designed without provision for big planes," he added.

Don't Provoke Nigerians Falana Warns FG, Politicians

Human rights activist, Femi Falana (SAN), has warned the Nigerian government and politicians not to provoke citizens to mutiny. Falana issued the warning while speaking at the National Symposium themed: "Nigeria Economy and the Crisis of Survival : Robbing the Poor to Pay the Rich" organized by the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) on Thursday in Abuja. Falana lamented that the poor are asked to tighten their belts and suffer the burden of the economic issues in the nation, while public officials keep spending lavishly. He warned that if figures of extravagant spending by the National Assembly continue to be churned out, Nigerians will be irritated and so will be enemies of democracy. The legal luminary also attributed the recent trend of military juntas in Africa, particularly the most recent one that occurred in Gabon, to a number of factors, including the ruthless exploitation of African countries' mineral resources by the west, third term syndrome, political manipulation of the constitution, and the establishment of foreign military bases in African nations. According to him, "They must be careful not to provoke Nigerians to mutiny. Some of the things going in the National Assembly shows that we are in trouble. 70 billion Naira for

palliatives for 469 people and when we said no they claimed it was for the facelift of the National Assembly. "Three years ago, 37 billion Naira was earmarked for the facelift of the National Assembly. That contract has not been fully executed and there is no renewal of the contract so you cannot talk about 70 billion Naira for facelift. "Secondly, 40 billion Naira to buy exotic cars now for the leadership of the National Assembly is not going to be allowed. "The latest provocative news from the National Assembly is that 54 billion Naira has been earmarked for constituency projects for 360 members of the House of Representatives. It has come to 150 million per person. Under this austere condition of the country. "So, when these figures are oozing out of the National Assembly Nigerians are being provoked and enemies of democracy are being provoked. "The military has been honest to say that they are under pressure to dismantle this rickety political system, but someone told them to go and deny it and they came out and denied it. But we can read between the lines. We can't gather here to talk about democracy that is under threat. "The immediate causes of coups in Africa today are third term syndromes, manipulation of constitution, military bases. "Today, America has 29 military bases in Africa. France has 15. Soldiers are protesting because numbers of these foreign bases are receiving salaries as if they are in their countries. So, the soldiers are protesting the preferential treatment between them and these foreign troops, so we must look at that. "The remote causes are the ruthless exploitation of the mineral resources of our country by western countries. The people are getting poorer. "The poor are asked to tighten their belts even when they are dying. We maybe there discussing democracy, democracy is under threat in Africa"

Economic and Oil Coup in Nigeria

The Nigerian government was spending much on the self-inflicted injury of fuel Subsidy for not being able to sustain the Refineries to function. The Government is the cause of the problem for not giving Nigerians their deserved functional Refineries. So, they must pay for fuel to be produced abroad and pay part off the transportation cost as well.

Nigeria created its problem of fuel hikes by ensuring that no refinery is working. Both legal and illegal ones were put out of functionality, even modular Refineries are starved of oil to produce fuel. The Senate deliberately turned a blind eye to making a law to stop the taking of crude oil out

of the country, after all they are getting their bank accounts credited to enjoy vacations. The ordinary Nigerian pays taxes to feed those self-representing lawless lawmakers who steal the common patrimony of the people in the name of Constituency projects. Those lawmakers and the presidency are so disoriented that they cannot think as free people who should command the productivity of petroleum products in the country. From all indications, economic Coup data has always been with us. If some cabals could stop our Refineries from working, is that not coup against the people? Those men Smile away with billions of naira for others to wallow in poverty and deprivation. Nigerians now pay the price of economic woes hardship, unbelievably terrible fuel hikes, and senseless hikes in the price of cooking gas.

If the Nigerian government could call our local production of petroleum products illegal, then why can't they do the legal ones and provide Nigerians with Fuel, Kerosene, and diesel? They only plot a coup to overthrow our local refinery operators when they cannot give Nigeria a single working refinery. We don't have Fuel, we don't have refineries we don't have good roads, we don't have electricity so what is the purpose of government? What a senseless democracy.

Defence Minister urges retired Military Personnel to embrace Health Insurance Scheme

The Minister of State for Defence, Bello Mohammed Matawalle, has encouraged retired military personnel to participate in the health insurance scheme provided by the Defence Health Maintenance Limited (DHML), which has already reached an enrollment of 110,000 beneficiaries. During an interactive session with veteran organizations organized by the DHML in Abuja, the minister, represented by Dr. Olajide Johnson, the Director of Health Service in the Ministry of Defence (MoD), stressed the importance of military veterans availing themselves of the health coverage provided after their years of service to the nation. He expressed gratitude that the federal government now recognizes the needs of veterans, remarking, "It's a positive development that the government is now considering veterans.

In the past, once you left the service, you were no longer considered, even though you had served the nation for years. At the time when you need the country the most, you were left alone." The minister highlighted that military veterans are fortunate to have a system that caters to their health needs in

their post-service years. He also noted that the civilian sector is looking to the DHML experience as a model to ensure that retirees can continue to access healthcare programs. Matawalle reported that more than 100,000 veterans have already enrolled in the program, with the numbers continuing to grow, and he encouraged others to take advantage of this valuable platform.

Nigeria's debt hit 87trillion...DMO

The Debt Management Office has said Nigeria's total public debt hit N87.38tn at the end of the second quarter of 2023. The figure represents an increase of 75.29 per cent or N37.53tn compared to N49.85tn recorded at the end of March 2023. The DMO in a report recently said the debt includes the N22.71tn Ways and Means Advances of the Central Bank of Nigeria to the Federal Government. The DMO stated, "Nigeria's total public debt stock as at June 30, 2023, was N87.38tn (\$113.42bn). It comprises the total domestic and external debts of the Federal Government of Nigeria, the thirty-six states, and the Federal Capital Territory.

"The major addition to the Public Debt Stock was the inclusion of the N22.712tn securitized FGN's Ways and Means Advances." The statement also noted that other additions to the debt stock were new borrowings by the Federal Government and the sub-nationals from local and external sources. It added, "The reforms already introduced by the present administration and those that may emerge from the recommendations of the Fiscal Reform and Tax Policies Committee, are expected to impact debt strategy and improve debt sustainability." The DMO had earlier projected that Nigeria's public debt burden may hit N77tn following the National Assembly's approval of the request by former President Muhammadu Buhari to restructure the CBN's Ways and Means Advances. The Ways and Means Advances is a loan facility through which the CBN finances the shortfalls in the government's budget. The Director-General of the DMO, Patience Oniha, during a public presentation of the 2023 budget organised by the former Minister of Finance, Budget and National Planning, Dr Zainab Ahmed, noted that the debt would be N70tn without N5tn new borrowing and N2tn promissory notes. However, the latest data showed that the current debt stock of N87.38tn exceeded the DMO's projection by N10.38tn. Further breakdown showed that Nigeria has a total domestic debt of N54.13tn and total external debt of N33.25tn. While the domestic debt makes up 61.95 per cent of total debt, the external makes up 38.05 per cent. It was also observed that there was a significant increase in both domestic and external debt within three months.

NLC Declares Nationwide Indefinite Strike

The Nigeria Labour Congress and the Trade Union Congress have declared a nationwide strike starting from Tuesday, October 3, 2023. This is

following what the Labour Unions tagged as the "failure" of government to successfully implement policies to alleviate the sufferings of Nigerians following the removal of the subsidy on Premium Motor Spirit. The NLC national president, Joe Ajaero, during a virtual National Executive Council meeting which was held on Zoom, Tuesday told members of NEC that a meeting was held with the officials of the TUC to deliberate on ways forward.

Ajaero noted that it was resolved that the two centres work together to make their stance known to the government. "Initially some members did not want us to work with the TUC but as of now, we don't have a choice. The government has not been proactive. So, it is going to be a definite action this time around." The 21-day ultimatum given by the NLC ended last week. The national president of the NLC, Joe Ajaero had complained that "none of the demands put before the Federal Government had been addressed." The union first observed a two-day nationwide warning strike on September 5 and 6 to show its readiness for the indefinite strike later in the month. Among other things, the NLC and the TUC are asking for wage awards, implementation of palliatives, tax exemptions and allowances to public sector workers and a review of the minimum wage.

Defence Minister condemns Zamfara student abduction

The Minister of State for Defence, Dr. Mohammed Bello Matawalle, has vehemently denounced the abduction of female students at Federal University Gusau, Zamfara State. He conveyed this condemnation through a statement provided to defense correspondents in Abuja by the Acting Director (Press and Public Relations) of the Ministry of Defence, Attari Hope. In the statement, the Minister expressed his heartfelt sympathy to the parents, academic community, and the entire populace of Zamfara State over this tragic incident. He stated, "I share in your pain and strongly condemn this reprehensible act perpetrated by suspected bandits." Dr. Matawalle assured the state's citizens of the safe release of the abducted students, emphasizing that both the air and ground components of the military have been extensively deployed within the state to track down the abductors of these innocent students.

he Minister underscored that all necessary measures would be taken to safeguard the lives and property of all Nigerians, emphasizing that securing the release of the abducted students is a collective endeavor. He also pointed out that as part of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's eight-point agenda for strengthening national security for peace and prosperity, he condemns the act and is committed to ensuring the safe release of the abducted students. Furthermore, the Minister reassured the citizens of the Federal Government's unwavering commitment to providing security for their lives and property.