

When the Attorney General becomes the shield of corruption

"The AGF's primary duty is to protect the public interest and uphold the Constitution. When that office becomes a weapon to shield the corrupt from their day in court, the law ceases to be a refuge for the innocent and becomes a fortress for the guilty".

BY CHIDI KANU

Nigerians woke up in shock to the recent revelation by Sahara Reporters—a publication that has consistently risked all to expose the rot eating deep into our justice system. This time, the scandal centers on the abusive use of nolle prosequi by the Honorable Attorney General of the Federation (AGF), Lateef Fagbemi, SAN. His latest move? The withdrawal of the Federal Government's prosecution of Ahmed Kuru—former Managing Director of AMCON—over the theft and criminal diversion of ₦20 billion in public funds to acquire a bank, in concert with his father-in-law, the late Alhaji Ismaila Isa Funtua, and his associate, Alhaji Kashim Modibbo to acquire Keystone Bank. Let us be clear: Modibbo had already pleaded guilty and forfeited all proceeds of crime. The evidence is overwhelming. This was a case painstakingly built by the EFCC's tireless investigators—a case that should have been a milestone in Nigeria's fight against high-level corruption. Instead, the Attorney General's intervention has now turned it into a symbol of the State's complicity in shielding the powerful from justice. For us as a people, this is not just a legal maneuver—it is a betrayal. By his actions, Mr. Fagbemi has violated Nigeria's trust and effectively endorsed corruption under the banner of the Bola Tinubu administration. The AGF's withdrawal of the case is not an act of justice; it is a political absolution for the well-connected.

And this is not an isolated incident. Sahara Reporters has further exposed the corrupt withdrawal of the prosecution of former Aviation Minister Stella Oduah over her infamous misuse of public funds to purchase bulletproof cars. In another bizarre turn, a court reportedly directed the Attorney General to take over the Oduah case when her political lobbyists failed to bribe the EFCC into dropping charges. Such judicial interference is a mockery of the rule of law—it is settled in law that only the appointor of the Attorney General, in this case Mr President not the courts, can determine whether to take over or withdraw a prosecution. Yet, instead of defending the public interest, Mr. Fagbemi appears eager to use the delegated powers to dismantle the very cases that could restore public confidence in our institutions. His intervention in the First Bank–Oba Otudeko saga is



another case in point—stepping in not as a neutral arbiter of the law, but as the self-appointed “new judge in town” to midwife questionable settlements that favor entrenched financial interests over justice. This pattern reveals something more dangerous than incompetence—it is a deliberate, vested interest in arranging the burial of corruption cases before they can see the light of day. It is the transformation of the Attorney General's office from the “people's lawyer” into the “engine room” of the very corruption it should be dismantling.

How do we as a people stand in the comity of Nations, when we have showed that we worship corruption and have no respect

for the same law that we profess regulates of our society. Now Mr. President is off on another rounds of global travels persuading investors who he cannot assure of protection of their investments through the law of his own country. All the Heads of diplomatic missions are here watching the Nigerian shameless macabre dance at the altar of corruption and sending beautiful pictures of our show of shame to their respective countries, where the same Ahmed Kuru had allegedly fled for medical treatment and our President is expected to return with bags of foreign investors' money. As the GenZs will say, *dey play*

The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) must now step forward—not with empty press statements, but with decisive action to save the justice system from one of its own. The AGF's primary duty is to protect the public interest and uphold the Constitution. When that office becomes a weapon to shield the corrupt from their day in court, the law ceases to be a refuge for the innocent and becomes a fortress for the guilty. If the law officers who should give the nation hope become the vampires feeding on its lifeblood, we should not be surprised when anarchy knocks at our door. In this dark hour, Sahara Reporters deserves commendation for refusing to be silenced, for keeping the light trained on those who prefer to work in the shadows. Nigeria cannot afford an Attorney General who is an insider in the cartel of corruption. If we fail to act now, we will be writing the death warrant of justice in this country.