



September 11, 2007

Dear President Umaru Yar'Adua,

LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN THE ATTORNEY GENERAL AND MINISTER OF JUSTICE

The Citizens for Nigeria (CFN) is encouraged by some of the steps your administration has taken in nation building in the first 100 days. Steps directed to restore order and social justice in matters concerning the Niger Delta saga, the release of funds to Lagos State and the reversal of the sale of the NNPC, among others, required courage, and we salute you. These efforts are in the right direction and deserve the support of all Nigerians.

The Citizens for Nigeria at home and around the world have been monitoring the fight against corruption with keen interest. This fight must be won if Nigeria is to transform to a respected player in the international community. Nations with minimal levels of corruption have surged ahead in development, compared to countries where corruption is institutionalized. It is, therefore, imperative that your government firmly and decisively fight corruption with deeds matching its public expression to do so.

There is serious doubt cast on your government's intent to genuinely fight corruption by the actions of the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Mr. Michael Aondoakaa. Given the monumental nature of the fight against corruption in Nigeria today, we believe all hands must be on deck to combat this prevailing destructive social vice in our society.

Instead of complementing the efforts of the EFCC and ICPC, Mr. Aondoakaa is busy scanning the constitution in order to find ways to bring these well-respected agencies to their knees. The "rule of law" is, essentially, intended to protect civic rights, preserve institutions, and ensure that anybody, no matter how highly placed, who contravenes these rules is made to face the wrath of the law fairly and equally. It does not offer an umbrella for corrupt officials who face prosecution. Rather, it ensures that a governor who embezzles public funds is treated the same way as a bricklayer who steals his customer's bricks.

Prior to his appointment as the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Mr. Aondoakaa had been involved in the legal defense of some of those currently being prosecuted for corruption. As a private counsel, he was free to practice law the way he saw fit. Now as a public servant, the Minister of Justice must operate with restrictions imposed by his exalted, but important office. The Attorney General, who is also the Minister of Justice - two separate but relevant functions - must protect the public from those Mr. Aondoakaa had previously defended, and be perceived to be fair and honest in the process. As an Attorney General who must prosecute the very same people on whose behalf he has acted as counsel, there is a serious conflict of interest.

Mr. Aondoakaa would have acted with decency if he took his hands off the prosecution of former office holders entirely. Instead of following the path of decency, Mr. Aondoakaa has, since his appointment, significantly devalued the moral authority of your government to fight corruption. He is not only acting under the guise of the rule of law to fight the anti-corruption agencies from within, he has greatly eroded the confidence the nation and international observers have in your administration's ability to fight corruption. We humbly remind you that as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, you are ultimately responsible for the performance of those appointed into your cabinet.

CITIZENS FOR NIGERIA



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The contributions of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), with Mr. Nuhu Ribadu as its Chairman, and the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related Offences Commission, with Justice Emmanuel Ayoola as Chairman, reverberate positively in Nigeria and internationally. Your government cannot afford to be identified as a drag to the selfless efforts of these noble agencies.

The lackluster attitude and unwillingness of Mr. Aondoakaa to join the fight against corruption, shown through his tricks to frustrate the excellent work of the EFCC, ICPC and other law enforcement agencies, leave us no alternative, but to call for his immediate replacement.

The struggle in Nigeria today is primarily between those who want to continue with the failed corrupt practices of the past and the vast majority who are simply sick and tired of these rampant uncivilized tendencies. We are in no doubt that Mr. Aondoakaa is occupying the wrong office at the wrong time in our nation's history. There is need to emphasize that our national interest is far more important than the apparent misadventure of Mr. Aondoakaa.

Consistent with civilized norms, the immediate resignation of Mr. Aondoakaa from the office of the AGF is hereby demanded. Furthermore, regardless of whether or not the Presidency decides to split the office of the Attorney General of the Federation from that of the Minister of Justice, the full cooperation of the next occupant of the office of the AGF with the EFCC, ICPC and other law enforcement agencies in the fight against corruption is hereby equally demanded unconditionally. We believe there are many patriotic Nigerians who are genuinely committed to the fight against corruption in line with the desires of the vast majority of Nigerians. Regrettably, members of the Citizens for Nigeria (CFN) hold the position that the current AGF, Mr. Michael Aondoakaa, cannot, by his actions since he assumed office as Nigeria's AGF, be counted as belonging in such a group of noble Nigerians.

Mr. President, we strongly believe that Nigeria has a golden opportunity through your leadership to turn the corner of progress for good and lift our gifted nation out of the gutters of corruption to its right position in the world community of civilized nations. Therefore, Mr. President, while relieving Mr. Aondoakaa of his current duties as AGF will not necessarily please the "special interests" attempting to hold your administration hostage via a seemingly willing and apparently deceptive cabinet official, such a decision on the part of your administration will certainly be hailed as courageous, and will equally go on record as having been made in the best interest of a vast majority of the citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

cc: Mr. Michael Aondoakaa, Attorney General and Minister of Justice
Mr. Nuhu Ribadu, EFCC Chairman
Justice Emmanuel Ayoola (rtd.), ICPC Chairman

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