



For Immediate Release

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PRESS RELEASE: The War Against Ribadu



New Jersey, United States – The Citizens for Nigeria (CFN) calls on all Nigerians to shower their anger over latent and manifest actions of President Umaru Yar'Adua and his officials to ridicule and consign into obscurity, the former Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Mr. Nuhu Ribadu. The Yar'Adua administration has, since its inception, led the world to believe it respected the rule of law and focused on the war against corruption, but has in its actions demonstrated an unmistakable disdain for the symbol of the war, Mr. Nuhu Ribadu. The arrest of the former anti-corruption czar at his graduation from the national policy institute was calculated to humiliate him further; and no matter what the administration may like Nigerians to believe, the nonsense has got to stop now. And it will only stop if Nigerians cry out in annoyance.

President Yar'Adua is a crafty politician, believe it or not. He knows when to kick the baby in the stomach, and when to cuddle the same baby in a pose of care. That is exactly what he has been doing, not only with Ribadu, but with the war on corruption. While he continues to kick the war in its soft belly, he has also been unrelenting in telling Nigerians the war is stronger than ever. The question is: is the war still strong?

Apparent not!

Do we know on whose side the President is fighting?

Certainly not!

Since Mr. Yar'Adua came to power, not a single politician has gone to jail for corrupt enrichment. Piles of cases that had matured during Ribadu's tenure at the EFCC have been dismantled under the new management of the organization. It is ironic that the crux of the EFCC current annoyance with Ribadu is that the organization does not have the case files on the former governors that had been awaiting trial. No one believes that argument except the Presidential Palace. There cannot be a lack of evidence to probe the most brazen theft of public funds after only a few years. If there is no evidence, it is because there is no will to find any evidence.

All the governors who had fled the country while Ribadu was after them have returned home, enjoying their loot in peace and tranquility, courtesy of the relaxed climate for looters provided by the current administration. Kalu, Dariye, Igbinedion, Daniel, and Akala can't have a more peaceful moment than now since the days of the EFCC. Even Fayose and Alamiyeisegha are claiming to be victims of persecution. The war on corruption has become so confused the nation is watching the looters go free. Under a new management, the EFCC turns a blind eye on the billionaire robbers, and instead goes after

school administrators, local government councilors and other petty thieves. The only boast of the EFCC these days is how much money it has recovered, not who it has gone after. All the white collar robbers need to do now is return some money and enjoy the rest. "Arrangement against corruption" is now in fashion. The EFCC has forgotten that it's not just how much was recovered but the weight of those brought to book that eventually signifies that business as usual is over.

The fact is that this administration, since it's choice of Mr. Michael Aondoakaa, as the chief legal officer overseeing the probing of those whom he had stoutly defended against justice, has waged war against corruption from the very beginning.

The CFN had warned this administration from the start not to let the war against corruption fizzle. We wrote President Yar'Adua, promising to stand by him if he would continue to fight and lend his full support to the activities of the EFCC. At this juncture, we are beyond doubt that President Yar'Adua is demonstrably opposed to any action that would cause corrupt officials to be prosecuted. It is pathetic that the hope and expectation of all Nigerians that corruption would begin to decline under democratic administrations has been misplaced.

President Yar'Adua thinks he is smart, and Nigerians are too stupid to read his motives and intents clearly. While he may have calculated correctly to a large extent, still a lot of Nigerians are not fooled. We all know this war on corruption is now comic; just a public spectacle like the Nigerian Police, which does not police anything. The administration is setting itself up for opposition and civil action with its in-your-face humiliation of the man whom we all respect, the symbolic hope for honesty leadership. The government's about-turn in the face of angry responses by civic groups to Ribadu's ill-advised arrest at the NIPSS graduation ceremony is not enough. Until Yar'Adua restores all it has stolen from Nuhu Ribadu, and returns to an honest bid to rid the nation of corrupt people (if that may at all be expected under this administration), instead of claiming to respect the rule of law (which no longer has a clear definition), he will continue to stir the anger of right-thinking, honest Nigerians everywhere.

The flagrant disrespect for honesty, probity and integrity in public service by this administration has to stop. The nation has been abused for too long. We don't need a soft-talking, pretending President to continue the rape. This is one slap too many. President Yar'Adua has to be called to order by the civil society. A man for whom the election was awarded should show some humility or be humiliated. We must rise up and fight for Ribadu, and the many things we have been promised in vain by the weak, do-nothing administration of Mr. Yar'Adua.

If we fail to fight for Ribadu, we fail to protect our interest, and we kill the nation slowly.

Editor's Note: The Citizens for Nigeria (CFN) has a central objective of bringing ordinary Nigerians into the political process, whether they are at home or abroad. The CFN was formed out of the realization that Nigerians are suffering because the leaders have hijacked power completely from the citizens, and voters have lost hope in the democratic process. The CFN comes to restore hope by simple, dedicated and targeted actions that would bring real Nigerians back into the political process.