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January 5, 2010

President Barack Obama  
The White House,  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue,  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

## **Nigeria Is America's Friend**

We write as a group of American and Nigerian citizens working to bring the promise of freedom, entrenched deep in America's foundations, to the suffering masses of Nigeria.

The Citizens for Nigeria (CFN) is shocked and saddened by the involvement of a Nigerian national, Umar Farouk Abdul Mutallab, in the losing side of the world's war against terrorism, which has pitted the free world against radical Islamic jihadists and their die-hard religious fundamentalists. The unfortunate turn of events in Detroit, Michigan, on Christmas Day, 2009, imposes yet another undeserved burden on Nigeria - a country of about 140 million hard-working people; the largest African and black nation, which has grappled with serious social and economic issues for much of her independent life.

Statistics and reports of all kinds have over the years painted a picture of a sad spectacle that Nigeria has become in the comity of nations. From military rule to misrule, corrupt administrations to tribal leadership, nepotism to war, national wastage to disregard for human rights, the Nigerian people have seen it all. They have never had a break, no matter how hard they tried.

When the results of a free and fair national election were annulled mid-course in 1993, Nigerians looked towards the United States and other free nations for deliverance. And when the beacon of that election, the late MKO Abiola, was at the threshold of winning his mandate, he died mysteriously in the hands of the US ambassador in Abuja. Nigerians suspected foul play, but did not begrudge America. They trusted a friend.

A vast majority of Nigerians have this strong faith and abiding confidence in the goodness, uprightness and strength of America.

That faith is now being questioned, unrewarded and seemingly betrayed by the lumping of Nigeria

with rogue nations, most of which have actively supported terrorism. This is an unfair decision, an over-reaction and a disproportionate punishment for the bad act of one man in a nation of 140 million people. Citizens of other good nations who have similarly gone astray, including Britons, Malaysians and Indonesians, have not caused their countrymen to be so labeled and treated with contempt by this great nation or ours, the United States of America. Amongst us Americans, we have even had misled miscreants, just like Umar Farouk Abdul Mutallab. And their singular actions did not make the rest of us a nation of bad people.

The decision to put Nigeria in the class of nations where significant segments of the population openly show hatred towards us, or with regimes that are spoiling to attack us, is unfairly rash, lacks comparison, extreme, and should be reconsidered.

The unrest repeatedly unleashed by reactionary and misguided Muslims, who try to oppress Christians and minorities of northern Nigeria, is most certainly a problem of the Hausa-Fulani ethnic group that the Nigerian government has to address with pressure from the international community. This brand of Islamic fundamentalism, which has troubled that section of Nigeria for decades, could have, and should still be, contained. Even though Mutallab's family is from that ethnic and geographic grouping, there is little reason to assert that his terrorist conduct was instigated by it, as there is strong evidence to suggest he was indoctrinated while studying in a British university. Therefore, Mutallab cannot represent the good nature and character of the other millions of Nigerians who cherish, love and identify with Americans and the United States.

As a group of American citizens of Nigerian descent, who do not only have the best interests of both nations at heart, but also work for social progressive change in our country of birth, we say without equivocation that Nigerians, in spite of their tough national problems, are faithful and loyal friends of the United States of America. A 2009 report by the Pew Research Center on America's favorability rating around the world bears testimony to this assertion. Nigerians were shown to have more positive view of the United States of America than most countries in Europe. While 79% of Nigerians had favorable opinions, Canada had 68%, England 69%, Egypt 27%, Israel 71%, Russia 44%, Germany 64%, Japan 59% and Palestinian Territory 14%.

We are of the view, therefore, that this relationship must be strengthened, not weakened; built upon, not torn; and nurtured, not worn. The act of one errant individual should not be strong enough to tear down the strong cords of love and hope. This is an opportunity to keep the fire of hope burning among Americans and Nigerians alike for better days; to tell our common Islamic fundamentalist enemies that they can not use one to destroy many.

The decision of the US Government to treat Nigeria the same way as the likes of Pakistan, Yemen, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and Iran will impose adverse economic, social and political problems on the innocent citizens of a country already reeling under mismanagement, poverty and bad leadership.

We, members of the Citizens for Nigeria (CFN), think that Nigeria deserves better from her longtime friends and people of this great nation, the United States of America. So, on behalf of millions of peace-loving people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria who honor and cherish the values and ideals of

freedom and progress for which Americans stand, we call on the government of the United States of America to reconsider and rescind the present blanket categorization of Nigeria alongside other nations with demonstrated and proven history of state-sponsored terrorism and ties to international terrorists.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Henry Ayo Abimbola". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "H" and a long, sweeping underline.

Henry Ayo Abimbola, Converse, TX

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Tunde Odediran". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with a large initial "C" and a long, sweeping underline.

Chris Tunde Odediran, Roselle, NJ

**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.