

PRESS STATEMENT

Killers of #EndSARS Protesters Must Be Held To Account

Abuja, October 21, 2020

We, the undersigned coalition of civil society organisations, are deeply shocked by the killing of peaceful protesters across Nigeria yesterday. The attempt to fight for justice over police brutality has again revealed the brutal nature of the Nigerian state. At the last count, not less than 40 Nigerians have lost their lives as a result of violent attempts to crack down or disrupt the ongoing protests against police brutality. There is also documentary evidence, which indicts a combined force of sponsored thugs and members of the Nigerian security forces for the deaths of innocent protesters. Particularly disturbing is the massacre of unarmed and very peaceful protesters at the Lekki Toll Gate in Lagos yesterday. The sight of the Nigerian flag stained with the blood of the nation's youth, in a month the country celebrated sixty years of independence, is a gory sight to behold. These killings are totally unacceptable, just as they stand condemned.

It is pertinent to recall that this coalition previously warned the Nigerian authorities about the danger of deploying the military to confront unarmed protesters. We therefore strongly condemn the needless loss of the lives of young Nigerians as a result of the blatant refusal to heed warnings that the government should NOT bring in the military to quell a protest by citizens demanding police reforms and good governance. This coalition further condemns the lack of restraint, and the level of impunity displayed by the Army Officers who obeyed this unlawful order to unleash maximum force on protesters.

It is disheartening that members of the armed forces, who are supposed to be servants and protectors of the people are the very elements firing live ammunition on protesters, resulting in the death and injury of scores of citizens. We reiterate our initial point by stating that the grievances driving the protests are legitimate, and also condemn the activities of hoodlums, who have perpetrated acts to cause mayhem and undermine the essence of the peaceful protests. This coalition stands with other Nigerians in affirming our constitutional right to protest.

We call on all friends of Nigeria to sustain pressure on the government of President Muhammadu Buhari to rein in members of the armed forces carrying out these killings of unarmed protesters. We demand the investigation of perpetrators of the ongoing atrocities targeted at unarmed protesters.

We call on the National Assembly to hold an emergency session to address the killing of protesters and hold a national public hearing to investigate the abuse of power and killing of peaceful protesters by security agencies and the failure to arrest thugs and hoodlums who attacked the #EndSARS protesters and innocent citizens across different states.

This coalition calls on the International Criminal Court to open investigation to ongoing crimes against humanity being committed against the peaceful and unarmed #EndSars protesters in Nigeria. We also demand an open trial of all those involved in previous acts of police brutality, human rights abuse and crackdowns, which have led to the needless deaths of defenseless citizens.

Finally, the events of Tuesday October 20, 2020 is a reminder that our democracy is fragile and we the people must defy the odds and fight for a democracy generations to come will be proud of. We stand with Nigerian youths who defied the odds to make their voices heard. We mourn with Nigerians who have lost loved ones since the #EndSARS movement. We urge the youth to remain peaceful. The struggle has just begun, and the people of this country must brace up to take their destinies into their hands.

Signed:

1. Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD)
2. Enough is Enough (EIE)
3. Partners for Electoral Reform
4. Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC)
5. Centre for Information, Technology and Development (CITAD)
6. Yiaga Africa
7. Global Rights
8. Project Alert
9. Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC)
10. Paradigm Initiative (PIN)
11. Rule of Law and Accountability Centre (RULAAC)
12. HEDA Resource Centre
13. African Centre for Media & Information Literacy (AFRICMIL)

14. Community Life Project (CLP)
15. Protest to Power
16. Social Action
17. Right to Know
18. Lawyers Alert
19. Private and Public Development Centre
20. South Saharan Social Development Organisation
21. Partners West Africa- Nigeria
22. Centre LSD
23. Connected Development (CODE)
24. Stakeholders Development Network (SDN)
25. BUDGiT