PRESS RELEASE

Shrinking Civic Space: Civil Society condemns attacks, clampdown, arbitrary arrest, detention

Since return of democracy in 1999 and particularly following the 2019 general elections, the citizens were very hopefully of renewed vigor in addressing the myriad of problems bedeviling the country. These problems range from insecurity, corruption, poverty, unemployment to total disenchantment to the non-observance of the rule of law.

Nigerians had believed that the Administration which received the mandate of Nigerians for another four year term will reciprocate the goodwill and trust by embarking on well-articulated programme, open spaces for democratic engagement and allowing citizens’ voices to err their views as a way of strengthening the democratic space.

We are disturbed that the country is presently witnessing emasculation of alternative views on the state of the nation and governance. Recent incidences of the activities of government agencies come to mind to buttress these concerns:

1. Media harassment and intimidation

We observed that media remain a regular point of illegal attacks by the security agencies. Illegal arrest and detention of journalists are serious calls for concerns. This unconstitutional move backpedals constructive coverage and reportage.

2. Constant Harassment of Human Rights and Anti-corruption Civil Society Organisations

We find it worrisome, the continued attacks on human rights and anti-corruption civil society organisations and activists in the country. An instance is the unfair attack on Amnesty International Nigeria by some security agencies using hoodlums and miscreants threatening Amnesty International Nigeria to vacate the country. Calling for a legal organisation that has Nigeria citizens to vacate and leave the country without an attempt by security agencies calling such hoodlums to order.

3. The Unlawful ban on protest

We are seriously concerned over the unlawful statement issued by the authorities of the Nigeria Police Force threatening to prosecute the organisers of the peaceful rallies in Nigeria; as against the relevant constitutional and statutory provisions and judicial authorities which have recognised the fundamental right of the Nigerian people to convene and participate in rallies,
demonstration and protest marches to express their freedom of association through peaceful and non-violence manner.

We call for prompt withdraw of such unconstitutional position that deprives citizens from exercising their fundamental rights, giving the Constitutional provisions and legal pronouncement that “Every person shall be entitled to assemble freely and associate with other persons…” The purport of this right is that individuals can gather in groups for a lawful purpose. We therefore, call for restrained of arbitrary misuse of power against the citizens for a non-violent protest, demonstration to express their views.

We demand immediate release of all activists who are in detention for expressing their fundamental rights.

We call on security agencies and government officials to ensure total compliance of rules of law in their activities.

We also call on government to respect and allow civil space for meaningful contribution to democratic governance in Nigeria.

We further call on government to be more responsible and responsive for good governance.

Signed:

**SIGNED BY:**

1. Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD)
2. Centre for Democratic Research and Training (CRDDERT)
3. Civil Society Network Against Corruption (CSNAC)
4. Human and Environmental Development Agenda (HEDA Resource Centre)
5. Public Interest Lawyers League (PILL)
6. Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC)
7. Partners for West Africa - Nigeria
8. Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD)
9. Socio-Economic Right and Accountability Project (SERAP)
10. Falana Falana Chambers
11. CLEEN Foundation
12. International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI)
13. Zero-Corruption Coalition (ZCC)
15. Partners on Electoral Reform
16. State of the Union (SOTU)
17. African Centre for Media and Information Literacy (AFRICMIL)
18. National Procurement Watch Platform
19. Say NO Campaign—Nigeria
20. Resource Centre for Human Rights and Civil Education (CHRICED)
21. Social Action
22. International Press Centre
23. WANGONET
24. Community Action for Popular Participation
25. Borno Coalition for Democracy and Progress (BOCODEP)
26. Global Rights
27. Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC)
28. Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law
29. Alliance for Credible Elections (ACE)
30. Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth & Advancement (YIAGA)
31. Tax Justice Nigeria
32. Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth, Nigeria
33. Women In Nigeria
34. African Centre for Leadership, Strategy & Development (Centre LSD)