Prevalent kidnapping for ransom: CISLAC decries poor proactive measures, unencouraged security personnel, youth unemployment

The Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) is seriously concerned over the growing but pervasive rate of kidnapping, deliberately delayed response and the poor proactive measures by the government in the country.

Since 2007, Nigeria has witnessed increased increasingly spate of kidnapping in the South, particularly South-South and South-East geo-political zones. In spite of the security agencies’ investment in intelligence gathering to get advance information to nip their activities in the bud and also the formation of the various special Task Force on kidnapping, the business still strives.

While security of lives and property constitutes the fundamental purpose of government, we find it worrisome that kidnapping for ransom as a critical part of the evolution of crimes in Nigeria and direct threat to the constitutional right to live and freedom of movement of the people, has received little or no concern from the Government of Nigeria despite persistent public outcries on its accelerating unpleasant effects like killings, physical and psychological trauma, and socio-economic setback, on the victims and their families.

Most Nigerians had gone through the trauma of being guests of Kidnappers. Apart from paying hefty ransom, many of the victims did not live to tell their stories.

We are not unaware that kidnapping for ransom which began in the South South region as a form of measure adopted by the agitating youths clamouring for resource control and the Federal Government; and in the North East region as a sustenance fund raising strategy by the insurgents, remains a fast growing menace flooding the country with exhausting financial demands that exacerbate existing socio-economic burden on the victims and unprecedented intensity in Zamfara, Borno, Adamawa, Kaduna, Katsina states, and other extensively underreported cases.

We condemn poor response system and lack of appreciable proactive measures by relevant authorities, given the glaring danger alerts and trend of killings, ransoms and other illegitimately frustrating demands on the victims.

We are worried over the present inefficiency, high-handedness and underperformance of the security forces as clear manifestation of unchecked secrecy and faulty recruitment processes that dominate the forces.

Apart from the unaccountably questionable security votes, we are surprise that despite the huge budgetary allocation to defence and security in the country, the sector records severe systemic under-performance, poor personnel appraisal and encouragement, and dearth of appropriate incentives.
We are surprised that the increasingly budgetary allocation and other financial considerations attributable to the sector are not judiciously utilized to effectively upturn situations and efficiently address the prevailing security challenges bedeviling the country.

We are bothered by the poor state of infrastructural facilities across the country creating high tendency for poor standards of living with increasingly youth propensity to escape poverty and socio-economic deprivation.

More importantly, while the rising youth unemployment with its socio-economic and political effects is worrisome in the country, we find apparent failure of the government to curb the challenge through holistic revamping and transformation of the critical sector shameful and disturbing.

Although the creation of employment opportunities to absorb teeming youth constitutes majorly campaign promises and political agenda of successive administrations, the government has however, failed in initiating realistic needs assessment and appropriate ideology to address the scourge.

We urge the review of recruitment process of the security agents as they are clearly no match to terrorists and thugs. Wide-spread corruption in security sector impacts the moral and equipment of all security agencies. The re-prioritisation away from absurd protection of politicians and governmental executives towards intelligence gathering and prevention is required.

While the Police has a fundamental mandate to secure and protect the citizens, the obsolete legal framework, catastrophic mismanagement in the Police Force and the break-down of trust between the Police and the citizenry leaves the police corps and the citizens exposed to the violent crime. Nigerian police suffers combat-like losses every day.

We therefore, demand prompt response by the relevant authorities to bring under control the menace of mercantilist kidnappings.

We call for the immediate passage of the laws that will improve the framework conditions for the Nigeria Police Force and other agencies. We call for a holistic policy which will rapidly improve prevention, sanctions and investigation of the kidnapping epidemic.

We also call for clear lines of responsibilities and for consequential dismissal of political appointees and commanding officers if there is no rapid improvement measured by the decreased rate of kidnappings across the nation.

We therefore, demand institution of an emergency response system that will adequately interpret kidnapping in line with insurgency and terrorism.

We call for independent anti-graft and judicial institutions to award punishments for kidnapping and corruption in accordance with the rule of the law without fear or favour; as well immediate reform of the legal and judicial system to ensure strict compliance with the relevant laws relating to kidnapping and financial fraud.
We call for democratised political system enabling active youth participation in governance through proactive transformation of critical sector, holistic public policy and employment opportunity towards youth-centred and people-oriented socio-economic development.

We demand prompt confiscation or destruction of property and seizure of finances acquired by any person or group of persons found guilty of kidnapping.
We also call for adequate training and re-training, appreciable performance appraisal and incentive system for the security personnel with sufficient reward schemes for sustenance of the families of deceased personnel who died in active service.

We further demand for adequate provision of social infrastructural facilities across the country as enablers for socio-economic transformation, employment generation, youth participation and involvement, and poverty eradication.
Signed:
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