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**PRESS RELEASE**

**BUHARI'S GAFFE ON BALLOT BOX SNATCHING: CISLAC DEMANDS IMMEDIATE  
RETRACTION**

The Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre expresses greater disappointment at the recent undemocratic and ill-thought response by President Muhammadu Buhari to the reported cases of ballot-box snatching across the country.

We are surprised at such statement as a “potential execution order” from the President, not minding the present uncertainty that dominates the tension-soaked political atmosphere in the country.

We are concerned that the order, if not thoroughly supervised has potential of breeding extra-judicial killings, civil disobedience or disrupt law and order and grossly killing of innocent Nigerians who would be taking part in the rescheduled February 23rd polls.

While we work to uphold democracy and good governance in the country, we are at liberty to remind the President that the primary purpose of government is to promote, protect and secure human rights and fundamental freedoms as contained in the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action.

We must reiterate the importance of Right to Life as fundamentally part of human rights, citizens must be alive to pursue its justiciability.

We are not unaware that Section 128 of the Electoral Act state that **“any person who at an election acts or incites others to act in a disorderly manner commits an offence and is liable on conviction to a maximum fine of N500,000.00 or imprisonment for a term of 12 months or both”** and specifically states that anyone who destroys, or snatches election material is liable to imprisonment for 24 months. Nowhere is capital punishment prescribed as a penalty for any electoral offence in Nigeria.

With the elections having been postponed by a week, to allow the Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) to sort out logistics and other issues it claimed made them not go ahead with the elections as scheduled for February 16th, we expect nothing but statesman-like attitude from President, with sincere commitment to ensuring the process is free, fair, credible and devoid of rancour. The statement was indeed unpresidential and not good for the evolution of our democratic process.

We also recall that the Executive Governor of Kaduna State, Mallam Nasiru El-Rufai had in a statement recently threatened international observers who 'interfere' 2019 elections with death and bagging them in body bags shows a scant respect for human rights. Such utterances, actions and comments are unfortunate particularly coming from those considered to be statesmen. Despite the extra-judicial killings pervading the space in the buildup to the elections, CISLAC believes strongly that the inflammatory statements coming from political gate keepers can truncate our fragile democracy.

In compliance with the directives from Mr. President, the Nigerian Army had issued a statement vowing to obey the directives of the president. Such matching order to the military to deal ruthlessly with those attempting to disrupt poll is jungle justice and can truncate our already challenged democratic process and thereby set a bad precedent.

CISLAC therefore, call on security agencies to respect the rule of law and not take laws into their hands as they will take responsibility for any action.

To add to this, every known law to our democratic norms does not permit the armed forces anywhere near the parameters of the poll units and or points. In-fact, armed bearing police officers are not allowed any where close to the poll. It is therefore ultra vires, for any security agents to comply with any illegal directives. Illegality does not support legalize illegality!

We must remind security agencies must note that such directive is not bigger than the oath to protect and defend the citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Global security norms have moved from regime to human security. It is

therefore imperative for the President to immediately retract, withdraw and or apologize to Nigerians for such unpatriotic statement.

CISLAC remains committed in supporting a peaceful and non-violent elections. Our commitment to a fledgling democracy and democratic processes has reinforced our support to the electoral body in conducting free, fair and credible elections.

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