

A SUMMARY OF STRIKES DURING APRIL 2021

We need your assistance to ensure that this monthly strike report is comprehensive. Please submit details of any strikes or other protests in your state or community to the Socialist Labour WhatsApp group or to socialistlabour.ng@gmail.com

Members of the Parliamentary Staff Association of Nigeria (PASAN) staged a nationwide protest last Tuesday (23rd March) over the lack of financial independence for State Houses of Assembly and to mark the start of their indefinite national strike. All State Houses of Assembly are shut. Section 121(3) of the Federal Constitution and Presidential Order 10 of 2020 gave autonomy, but this has yet to be implemented as state governors want to hold on to their financial powers and so frustrate payments of salaries, pensions etc. Despite PASAN being a member of NLC, no mention of their strike was made in the Communique of the NLC National Administrative Council of 14th April.

Judiciary workers, members of JUSUN, started national indefinite strike from Tuesday 6th April. This is over the same demands as the parliamentary workers – financial autonomy. The Federal Courts have joined this strike despite their agreement. JUSUN organised protests on Monday 19th April in Abuja and state capitals. As a member of NLC, JUSUN was provided with solidarity by the NLC NAC of 14th April, but no action was promised for its strike. The Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) has agreed to fully implement financial autonomy for state judiciary and legislature by next month. But latest meeting with Government ended with solidarity songs.

The Academic Staff Union of Polytechnics (ASUP) on Tuesday 6th April declared an

indefinite strike to demand the implementation of a new salary scheme for polytechnic lecturers. The union is also demanding payment of salaries and promotion allowances owed lecturers by some state governments. Progress was noted in some states, notably Kano, Katsina and Osun, over unpaid salaries, lack of governing councils and non-implementation of new minimum wage. There are 31 Federal Polytechnics and 48 at state level.

The Joint Action Committee (JAC) of the Akwa Ibom State University re-commenced its suspended strike action over alleged non payment of 10 months' salary arrears and other issues on Monday, 19th April. The JAC comprises the institutions' Academic Staff Union of Universities, Non-Academic Staff

Taraba State University chapter of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) started an indefinite strike action on Tuesday 2nd March. The union's demands include the non-availability of the pension scheme, earned academic allowances and perimeter fencing. The strike started a few days after the state government paid off the four months' salary arrears owed academic staff of the institution.

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), Ambrose Alli University, Edo State, on Friday 26th March began an indefinite strike over non-payment of salaries, check-off dues and other sundry deductions in the university.



Benue State PASAN protestors, 23rd March.

Union Universities, Senior Staffs Association of Nigeria Universities and the National Association of Academic Technologists. A previous strike had been suspended on 16th February, but the management reneged on its agreements.

Hundreds of primary and secondary school teachers from **Rivers State Government-owned tertiary institutions**, on Wednesday, 21st April, protested in front of Government House and demanded the payment of their five years salaries arrears. The protest are to continue on a monthly basis until the teachers' salaries are fully paid.

The National Executive Council (NEC) of the **Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC)** on Wednesday, 17th February "directed all states where the national minimum wage of N30,000 is yet to be paid to immediately proceed on industrial action." The NEC viewed "the refusal to pay the new national minimum wage by state governments... as an act of criminality, betrayal of the oath of office sworn by state chief executives and a dangerous adventure in anarchy." The states involved include Ebonyi,

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WE NEED MORE ACTIVE LEADERSHIP FROM THE LABOUR MOVEMENT



Working people are now suffering a major attack. The minimum wage of N30,000 has yet to be implemented in most states (two years after it became law). Yet fuel, electricity and other prices continue to rise every day, with record inflation in March. Now Kaduna, Kano and other states are launching massive attacks on their workers. But, so far there is almost no active response from the trade union movement, especially from those who should be leading the fight back.

of the minimum wage. Even at N30,000, due to inflation, it will only buy around half as much as it would a decade ago

We need a fight for a reasonable minimum wage

In the middle of February, the National Executive Council of the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) "directed all states where the national minimum wage of N30,000 is yet to be paid to immediately proceed on industrial action."

Taraba State NLC and TUC did strike from March 22nd over the failure of the state government to implement the new national minimum wage. But this was suspended three weeks later with merely an agreement to implement the minimum wage within three months.

Then we hoped the fight would start in Kano, where the governor reduced the

minimum wage back to N18,000 with the March salaries. The NLC pulled out at the last minute and cancelled a planned three day strike. The governor merely had to promise to repay the illegal deductions in April or May if the FAAC allocations increased.

The only way the NLC can win a decent minimum wage for workers is a major fight to frighten the Federal Government and the state governors. We need that now to win N30,000 for all and another major increase to be paid this year.

Kaduna State Announces Mass Sack of Workers

The Governor of Kaduna State recently announced a massive retrenchment of staff and is now threatening to return the minimum wage to only N18,000. But in his letter to the Governor, Wabba, the NLC National President, started by sending

his "fraternal greetings" and ends by sending his "warm regards"!! The only threat that was offered is that "Organised Labour will not hesitate to fall back on the lawful options available to workers".

The NLC National Executive Council has agreed to call a five day national warning strike over these attacks. We need to campaign in trade union branches to ensure that the NLC keeps its promise this time.

Conclusions

The doctors, judiciary workers, house of assembly workers and polytechnic workers have all demonstrated leadership recently by organising national indefinite strikes. It is this type of action, with solidarity from across the trade union movement, that is needed to win our demands.

We need other national industrial unions like AUPCTRE, NULGE, NUT and the health unions under JOHESU to take action over the minimum wage, retrenchments and illegal deductions of salaries. We need rank and file members of these and other trade unions to organise and to push their national leaderships to deliver the action that is so badly needed.

We have to push back these attacks by so many state governments!

We call on the state, zonal and branches of the trade unions to draw up resolutions, calling on their national bodies, to deliver the five day nationwide warning strike promised by the NLC. This must only be the starting point for a massive campaign over the series of attacks being unleashed on the working class.

United we can win! A victory for one is a victory for all! Solidarity brings Victory!!

Socialist Labour – JOIN US

We are socialists and Marxists

The economic, environmental and Covid-19 crises have made clear that capitalism is a conflict between two classes: the vast majority who create the wealth, and a tiny minority who profit from it. Attempts to reform capitalism have failed: the only solution is to replace it with a truly democratic socialist society. Capitalist rulers will only give up power if forced to do so. We need a mass democratic movement to bring about socialism. Events, such as the Russian Revolution of 1917, January 2012 in Nigeria and the uprisings in Sudan and Algeria last year, show what is needed.

The organised working class is the central force for change

We believe that the organised working class (rank and file members of NLC/TUC) is the central force that can fight capitalism and build socialism. As Marx said, "the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself", so we do not believe that countries like China or the former USSR are socialist. We need the organised working class to lead the struggle for socialism, supported by the wider popular classes, the informal sector and market women.

We fight all forms of oppression

Capitalist society rests on exploitation and economic injustice, but also generates oppression, including sexism and racism. We are committed to fighting for the full social and economic equality of women and building a movement where the fight against any form of oppression is at the centre of the struggle for socialism.

We are internationalists, not nationalists

Capitalism seeks to divide us along lines of race, ethnicity, nationality and religion. We reject such divisions: we stand in solidarity with working people worldwide. We oppose imperialist wars and interference. We want a fairer world not just to develop the Nigerian economy. Issues like the environmental crisis and Covid-19 can only be addressed by pooling resources on a world scale.

A living and changing tradition

We draw on the tradition of past socialists like Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg. But the world is constantly changing. We need to discuss how those ideas should be reinterpreted and developed for the twenty-first century.

Space for discussion and action

We aim to create space where ideas are discussed and acted on. We reject any sectarianism, or any claim that a small number of activists can substitute for a larger movement. We use the opportunities provided by social media to organise better. We want to create a group with a lively and democratic internal culture. We want to discover, use and develop every member's skills. We aim to be accessible to people new to socialist ideas.

Working with others and learning from them

We encourage our members to work in popular campaigns (like ASCAB) and, where possible, to organise joint activities with other left groups. We learn from mass protests and other writers and activists. We don't have all the answers. We expect all our members to be active in their trade unions and to actively support struggles of unions other organisations of the oppressed strata of society in support of demands including the following:

- minimum wage of N30,000 to be implemented and raised annually as inflation rises
- no job or wage cuts allowed in current circumstances
- palliatives to be provided to all those affected by the lockdowns including basic income for informal workers
- adequate funding to provide healthcare and education for all and personal protection equipment (PPE) for all workers
- opposition to medical tourism by top public officers at public expense
- opposition to privatisation of public enterprises, we demand the reversal of past disposals of public assets.

We welcome everyone who hates capitalism and oppression

Everyone who agrees with our basic principles above is welcome to join Socialist Labour. We are more interested in men and women campaigning and discussing ideas than just joining us. In order to reach wider layers of society with our ideas, we will collaborate with other socialists in protests, social movements, alliances, campaigns and workplace struggles.

If you would like to join Socialist Labour, then please submit the following details:

Name: _____

Email: _____

WhatsApp number: _____

Workplace address/university/school: _____

Trade union: _____

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Minimum suggested monthly subscription levels are:

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COMMUNIQUE OF THE PEOPLE'S ALTERNATIVE POLITICAL SUMMIT (T-PAPS)



Preamble

The People's Alternative Political Summit (T-PAPS) held at the National Centre for Women Development, Abuja on the 26th and 27th March 2021. Delegates and observers participated in the Summit physically and virtually. Nigerians in the diaspora also participated virtually in the Summit. The Summit had delegates from the following initiatives and organisations;

- 1- Alliance on Surviving Covid-19 and Beyond (ASCAB).
- 2- Trade Union Congress of Nigeria (TUC).
- 3- Joint Action Front (JAF).
- 4- Coalition for Revolution (CORE).
- 5- Take Back Nigeria.
- 6- Amalgamated Union of Public Corporation Civil Service and Recreational Service Employees (AUPCTRE).
- 7- National Union of Allied Health Professionals (NUAHP).
- 8- Federation of Informal Workers of Nigeria (FIWON).
- 9- Socialist Party of Nigeria (SPN).
- 10- People's Redemption Party (PRP).
- 11- Socialist Labour (SL).
- 12- Socialist Workers and Youth League (SWL).
- 13- Civil Rights Council (CRC).
- 14- Social Mobilisation Project (SMP).
- 15- More Action Less Talk (MALT).
- 16- Protest to Power (P2P).
- 17- Human Rights Defenders and Protectors (HRD).
- 18- Social Action (SA).
- 19- Social Accountability and Environmental Sustainability Initiative (SAESI).
- 20- National Youth Democratic Association (NYDA).
- 21- Nigerian Youth Choice (NYC).
- 22- Youth Alternative Leadership Movement of Nigeria (YALMON).
- 23- Tubali Development Association (TDA).

Resolutions

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Delegates engaged in serious deliberations and debates and resolved on the following as the key takeaways, commitments and outcomes of the summit:

1. That a Common Political Platform be established as a tool for political engagement, social intervention and contestation for political power.
2. That the political platform shall be named in the interim as "The People's Alternative Political Movement" but with the ideological identity of the Coalition reflected in the description of the Movement (... **A coalition committed to the emergence of a mass workers party and the socialist transformation of Nigeria**). Towards this end, the Summit adopted a Political Action Programme and an Economic Action Plan as the basic working documents of the new movement and the basis for mobilising and organising the working and exploited peoples of Nigeria.
3. An interim frame work for the organising of the Movement and the composition of its interim organs and leadership was adopted.
4. That the next three months shall be used by participating organisations in the new movement to carry out consultations that will help to strengthen the movement, popularize the political platform and its program, mobilize other left groups and radical progressive forces to join us in the new initiative, and intervene regularly in the day to day struggles of the popular masses across the country.
5. That the platform would mobilise the working masses of Nigeria in contestation of political power with the ruling class by any means necessary; including through revolutionary electoral politics on the basis of class struggle.
6. That the movement will strengthen its relationship with the labour movement in order to reclaim the workers movement, broaden the base and promote working peoples' participation in the political and economic processes of the Country towards the realisation of the socialist transformation of Nigeria.
7. That as part of its organising and mobilization work amongs the popular masses the movement would build and organise amongst the women, the youth, the students, peasants, artisans, and other exploited and vulnerable groups in the country, as well as Nigerians in the diaspora; and building effective political relationships with their movements and organisations.
8. That understanding the existential challenge posed to the Country and her peoples by ethno-religious fundamentalist mobilisations and counter mobilizations, the Summit affirms that the Nigerian ruling class is incapable of resolving the crisis facing Nigeria, and that only a socialist transformation of Nigeria can adequately address these myriad of problems. Towards this end, the Summit affirms that a new Nigeria is possible and the Peoples Alternative Political Movement is committed to the emergence of such a New Socialist Nigeria.

The Summit ended on a high note with Participating organisations and initiatives resolving to work collectively for the success of The People's Alternative Political Movement.

Comrade Toye Olorode
Co-Chair, T-PAPS COC

Comrade Jaye Gaskia
Secretary, T-PAPS COC



Beggars Protest Against Low Patronage In Oyo

On 1st April, about 250 beggars in Ibadan protested against low patronage by members of the public following a recent rumour that some rich men usually 'buy' money from them for fetish purposes.

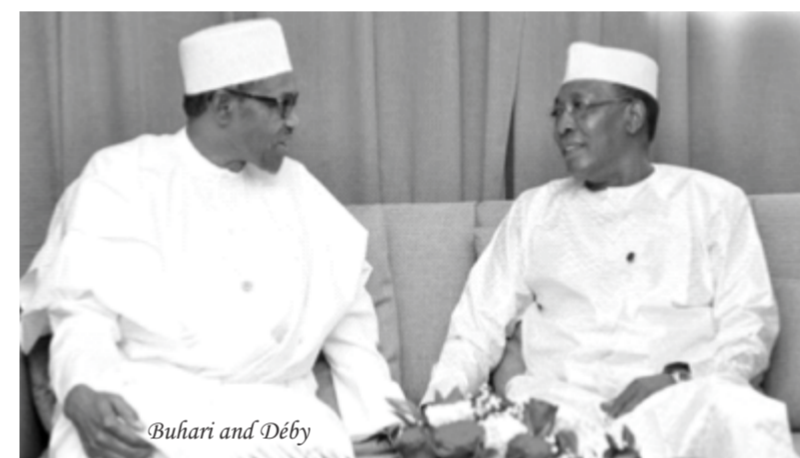
ELECTIONS IN BENIN AND CHAD THEN MILITARY COUP IN CHAD SHOWS NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT'S SUPPORT FOR DICTATORS ACROSS THE REGION

The Buhari Government showed its support for dictators across the region during the general elections in neighbouring Benin and Chad; and then the military coup in Chad. Fake elections in the Benin and Chad in April had nothing to do with freedom nor democracy. Yet these façades were given credence by the Nigerian government as the regional power in West Africa. Presidential "elections" were held in Benin on Sunday April 11 with the main opposition figures in retreat, exile or prison and key opposition leaders boycotted the election. The centre and the north of the country were paralyzed by demonstrators who denounced the confiscation of the ballot by the outgoing president, Patrice Talon. The former businessman made his fortune in agricultural inputs and then cotton and was first elected in 2016 when he promised only to stand for one term. He claims to have won 86% of the vote, but only half of the electorate voted.

Electoral workers tally the votes after the previous election in 2011.

Protestors shouted "Talon get out!" and "Five years is five years, not a day more". Some people were killed in gunfire in the central town of Bante when security forces fired warning shots.

According to several human rights NGOs, the situation continues to deteriorate. Since the beginning of this year, Amnesty International has documented the summons, arrest or conviction of at least twelve political opponents. The sitting



Buhari and Déby

President was given support with his visit to Buhari in January. Benin is dependent on trade with Nigeria. This suffered with the closure of the boarders last year.

As in Nigeria, the health sector is run-down and there was a two month strike in 2017 over threats of privatisation of the sector. Last year there were concerns about the re-opening of schools over Covid-19 and the threat of privatisation as a private sector agency was used to recruit and pay teachers.

Chad Vote

President Idriss Déby seized power with a military coup in 1990. It was claimed that he was re-elected for a sixth term on 11th April with 80% of the vote. As in Benin, opposition figures had called for a boycott of the polls. The people of Chad suffer from deadly ethnicism, generalized nepotism, institutionalized corruption, permanent war. The Chad government spends the same amount on the army as South Africa, this explains its strength. In contrast, as in Nigeria, 40% of the population live below the poverty line.

The British weekly, The Economist ranks Chad alongside North Korea and Syria among the five most authoritarian countries on the planet. The NGO Transparency International counts Chad among the five most corrupt countries in the world.

Déby a vicious dictator for 30 years is to be replaced by a Military Council led by his son. So much for democracy! He also claimed to have destroyed the rebels that managed to kill him.

It is hoped that the trade unions can take advantage of this situation to push for their demands. In 2018 there was a five month strike by public sector workers that won significant wage increases. In January 2020 there was a three day national general strike against austerity and cuts in workers' allowances.

President Buhari said: "I am deeply shocked and devastated by the sudden death of Idriss Déby... he was a friend of Nigeria who joyfully lent his hand to our efforts to defeat the murderous Boko Haram". Similarly, the French President Emmanuel Macron paid tribute to the late



President calling him a "brave friend" and "a great soldier".

Buhari and Macron were happy to support the former dictator who devoted so much of his countries resources to the army that was used against "the war on terror" in Mali, Nigeria and other countries in the region.

These 'democrats' were however, silent on military coup on 20th April, the day former president died. The army has said it has suspended the constitution, dissolved parliament and imposed a military council for 18 months. This is headed by the former president's son, Mahamat Idriss Déby, who was head of the Presidential Guard. Based on the Chadian constitution, the speaker of the parliament should assume power for an interim period of 40 days following the death of a sitting president.

In contrast, about 30 "democratic opposition political parties are calling for a civilian-led transition... through inclusive dialogue". They also called on the international community "to support the Chadian people in restoring the rule of law and democracy". In reality, global and regional powers, especially Nigeria, were content to support the Chadian dictator and will support his son as long as he brings 'stability' and supports "the war on terror".

A Summary Of Strikes During April 2021

Ekiti, Gombe, Imo, Kogi, Kwara, Ogun, Osun, Rivers, Zamfara and eight others.

Taraba State Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC), began the strike on March 22nd over the failure of the government to implement the new national minimum wage. It was suspended on 8th April with agreement to implement the minimum wage within three months by June.

National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) started an indefinite national strike from Thursday 1st April. NARD says families of 17 members killed by COVID-19 received nothing – despite N500bn released by the Federal Government last year for the COVID-19 response. The strike was suspended for four weeks from 10th April as some of NARD's seven-point demands had been implemented. The issue of the N5,000 hazard allowance has yet to be agreed over a year after the Covid-19 pandemic came to Nigeria.

The Maritime Workers Union of Nigeria (MWUN) on Thursday 15th April shut down the premises of AP Moller Terminals (APMT) at the Lagos Ports Complex in Apapa, over an alleged breach of local content law. The union have accused the management of APMT of employing foreigners for jobs that Nigerians are capable of doing. Wielding placards with inscriptions such as: "We say no to racism",

"Nigerians are qualified to do this job. Why foreigners?", the maritime workers blocked all entrances to the terminal. Work resumed two days later.

The Professional E-hailing Drivers and Partners Association (PEDPA), Uber and Bolt drivers especially in Lagos, began strike action on Monday 19th April. The strike is over the price of rides and the level of commission taken by the companies. Five members of the union leadership



Protestors in Rivers State

were detained by the police on 20th April for organising a protest at the National Stadium, Surulere. This was despite the police having been informed of the planned protest. Drivers in Kenya have given notice of similar action in May.

The National Union of Civil Engineering Construction, Furniture and Wood Workers embarked on an indefinite nationwide strike from Monday 19th April. The strike is about unfair labour practice by China Zhonghao Nigeria Ltd based in Kaduna. These include casualization of workers, and non-compliance with health and safety standards at work place.

Ogun State chapters of the National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives (NANM) and the Nigerian Medical Association went on strike from Tuesday 13th April over the high level of insecurity in the state.

Ondo State doctors started an indefinite strike on 1st February over half salary regime since November 2020, unpaid 3 months' salary and poor working conditions. This is under the auspices of Ondo Government Doctors Forum (OGDF). On 10th March members of Nigerian Union of Allied Health Professionals (NUAHP), Ondo State Chapter, joined the indefinite strike. Nurses also held a warning strike in March.

HOW CAN WE ADDRESS 'INSECURITY' – do aerial bombardments have any role?

On 3rd January 2021, French planes bombed a gathering near Bounty, a remote village in the middle of Mali. Soon afterwards, local people claimed that a wedding party had been attacked with many civilian deaths. The French tried to claim that they had 'neutralised' some 'terrorists'. After extensive research, the UN reported at the end of March that the local people had been correct all along and the French bombing had killed at least 22, mainly local people.

The UN deployed a research team of nearly 20 experts. They interviewed 115 people and another 200 people took part in their focus groups. They also referred to at least 150 publications including public and UN documents. The UN research team do not appear to have received any co-operation from the French forces in Mali. Apart from this, they appear to have undertaken a major independent study of this incident.

The UN's conclusion is that a group of around a 100 men at a wedding party were attacked from the air and 22 people were killed, including three armed men assumed to belong to the Katiba Serma group. This is an armed Islamic group operating in the region.

The French say that they had been monitoring the gathering for one and a half hours before their bombing. They claim it was a meeting of armed rebels who were all adult men. This is because the women and children were in a separate group preparing food for the celebration. Not an unusual situation in Muslim communities.

The UN research did not find any remains of motor bikes or other vehicles, weapons or ammunition. They did "establish the presence... of five (5) armed individuals, at least one of whom carried his weapon in a visible manner. They had arrived in the village aboard three (3) motorcycles in the morning of January 3 from another location." The UN research team "concluded that the gathering was a celebration of marriage which brought together a hundred people, mostly civilians living in Bounty" (page 14 of the report translated from the original French).

The week before the UN report was published the French were again accused of killing Malian civilians as a result of an air attack. These five or six teenage men were a small hunting party and only one of them had a gun. "I know all these young people. Some are from my family," Mohamed Assaleh Ahmad, mayor of the nearby village of Talataye [in another region of Mali], told Reuters by telephone. "We have seen these airstrikes in the past here. We

have never said anything, but this time, it is 100% an error."

These incidents should have clear lessons for socialists. Bombing should have no part to play in dealing with insecurity which is based on complex socio-economic conditions involving different ethnic groups and religions. As in Nigeria, the situation in Mali involves separatists as well as several Islamic groups. The presence of around 5,000 nominally Christian French forces have not really helped the situation. They have been in Mali since early 2013.

So the reaction of progressive people in Mali should be easy – they should demand that the French imperialists leave their country and stop bombing their people. But what about bombing by the Nigerian Air Force? If the French with access to all the latest technology cannot identify 'terrorists' from the air, are the Nigerian Air Force likely to be any more successful?

The Nigerian Air Force has been used on regular bombing missions in Borno State, especially over the last year or two. A typical report on such incidents was headlined: "Air Task Force destroys hideout, neutralises several terrorists at Sambisa Forest, Borno State." In March of this year, the Air



Nigeria Airforce mistakenly bombs displaced people

Force 'lost' a fighter aircraft on mission over Borno State. But the Air Force has also been used in several other states, especially in the last year.

In September 2020, Nigerian Air Force bombed camps allegedly used by bandits in Zamfara State. In November, Defence Headquarters said that "the Air Component of Operation Thunder Strike has disrupted activities of cattle rustlers in Kwiambana Forest area in Kaduna State, killing several bandits." In February of this year, the Kaduna State Government reported that "an air strike of Nigerian Air Force neutralised



bandits in Birnin Gwari and Giwa Local Government Areas of Kaduna." Finally in early April 2021, military jets were used as part of an attack on local communities in Akwa Ibom and Benué states have security personnel had been killed in each state.

Later last year the Air Force took delivery of 12 Chinese drones (unmanned aircraft) that can be used on bombing missions. The drones are based in Zamfara's capital, Gusau. The aircraft's area of operation will cover several states including Zamfara, Sokoto, Kebbi, Katsina, and some parts of Kaduna state according to the Air Force.

Most progressive people will except



that the use of attack aircraft and bombing raids by the Nigerian Airforce within Nigeria is not really acceptable. But what about the army? Unfortunately over the last few years, at least, the Nigerian Army has been repeatedly responsible for killing civilians, let's remember some of the most horrific of these events.

The Zaria massacre was carried out by the Nigeria Army, on Saturday, 12 December 2015. Nearly 350 civilians were killed after supporters of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria blocked the road that the head of the Army wanted to use. Many more Shiites have

been killed since including on the streets of Abuja. On Monday, 29th October, 2018 the security forces massacred at least 39 peaceful people marching along the road by the army road block on the road from Nyanya to Abuja.

60 people were shot and killed in south-eastern Onitsha city, in the two days surrounding Biafra Remembrance Day in May 2016. Another 90 killings were identified by Amnesty International in the year to August 2016 of pro-Biafra protesters in the south east of the country.

The security forces shot and killed at least a dozen people at Lekki Toll Gates and perhaps another 90 people associated with the #EndSARS protests in Lagos in October last year, and a further 50 in Benin City. In February 2021, helicopter support was used with the army against the Eastern Security Network in Imo State, terrorising many local people in the process.

The role of the armed forces is claimed to be to protect the people, but in fact it has always been to pacify the people, first for the colonialists and now for the domestic ruling class. If the Government is reduced to bombing its own country it has really lost control and the risk of further civilian deaths is too great. The lesson of the French bombing and killing of nearly 20 unarmed citizens at a wedding party in Mali is that the Nigerian Airforce should not be used on bombing missions in Nigeria. Similarly, the army should not be used or carry live ammunition in the streets of our cities.

The UN report, only available in French, it can be downloaded from: <https://www.bruxelles2.eu/wp-content/uploads/frappebounty-rap@minusma210330.pdf>

Kaduna State Government Retrenches Thousands

The Governor of Kaduna State announced a massive retrenchment of staff in mid-April. When these proposals first came to like they were considered to be fake news, but they have now been confirmed as a real threat. The proposals as outlined in an NLC letter of 14th April are:

1. Compulsory retirement of officers that are 50 years old and above;
2. Compulsory retirement of offices on Grade Level 14 and above even if they are less than 50 years;
3. Conversion to casual workers all category officers on Grade Level 01–06; and
4. The directive that no local government in Kaduna State shall have more than 50 staff 50 staff strength.

The Governor of Kaduna State, Nasir Ahmad el-Rufai is now 61 years old and so by his own rules should have been retrenched long ago!

Based on a survey in 2014, around 35% of Kaduna State's 25,000 workers were aged over 50 and 15% were on Grade Level 14 and above (many will be the same people as 80% of those aged over 50 were on Grade Level 14 and above). Almost a quarter of the staff were on Grade Levels 01–06 and so are now due to be casualised. This suggests that altogether about 60% of State workers will be affected by the recent attacks by the Governor or around 15,000 people at the state level not counting local government



workers.

More than 80 staff of the Jema'a Local Government in Kaduna received their letters of

disengagement from the state government on Wednesday, 7th April. In total it is estimated that Kano State wants to disengage 4,000 local government workers.

In his letter to the Governor, Wabba, the NLC National Presidents starts by sending his "fraternal greetings" and ends by sending his "warm regards"! The only threat offered is that "Organised Labour will not hesitate to fall back on the lawful options available to workers". Redundancy letters are already being prepared despite the State not complying with the law to negotiate terms.

Around 20,000 teachers were retrenched in 2017 after the state unilaterally and arbitrarily pegged the pass mark for the competency test at an unprecedented 75 per cent compared to 60 per cent level agreed with the trade unions. Many of these teachers are yet to receive their redundancy money. In addition, 8,000 state workers and 4,000 local government workers were retrenched by the

state in 2017. The trade unions did not fight properly so the State is attacking again. The NUT did go to court over these sackings, but eventually lost its case.

In May 2020, over 11,000 health workers in an impressive display of unity between 14 workers organisations including JOHUSU and the medical associations began a seven-day warning strike over retrenchments by Kaduna State Government.

Health workers protest in Kaduna

Kaduna State Government has done reasonably well by increasing its internally generated revenue over the last five years. IGR has increased by about 16% a year in real terms (after taking into account inflation). So IGR

is now about equal to the FAAC allocations or half the total income of the state. But other states like Lagos, Ogun and the FCT are doing much better at taxing their local businesses to fund development of the state and public services. In 2019 five states collected a higher level of IGR than Kaduna - Lagos, Rivers, FCT, Ogun, and Delta were the top five earners of IGR.

It is pointless comparing payroll to the FAAC allocations – although these are now increasing as crude oil prices have recovered from the Covid-19 dip. In fact actually spending on wages and salaries in 2019 (these are the last available audited accounts) was about a third the level that was spent on capital. In addition, the monies owed in salaries, pensions etc grew massively in 2019. At the end of



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KANO STATE: NLC CALLED OFF POPULAR STRIKE BUT WORKERS VOW TO CONTINUE FIGHT FOR MINIMUM WAGE

- Salisu Muhammad

A scourge is ravaging workers in Kano State, the scourge of "Gandomics!"

Kano workers are currently suffocating under the heavy yoke of incessant cuts to their hard earned salaries and wages, by the sleepy-eyed and conservative octogenarian Governor of the densely populated State, Dr. Alhaji Umar Ganduje.

It should be recalled that the Governor rode on the crest of the raging popularity of the minimum wage agitations spiritedly launched by workers in the State, to launder his battered image to the labouring masses. All the more so as he deceptively, and rather opportunistically, announced an additional N600 to the N30,000 agreed rate at the national level. This was obviously a Greek gift targeted at the workers which was deftly designed to secure desperate and critical support for his then political ambition to win a second term in office.

Now in the second year of his second and last gubernatorial tenure, the Governor is mercilessly sharpening and poisoning his deadly anti-working class arrows. His sole aim is to punitively pauperise the hardworking poor people of the ancient commercial city, mainly through various illegal, painful and kleptocratic salary and pension cutting devices. Governor Ganduje's penchant for undermining the pittance called workers' salaries started manifesting

during his first term in office. Then the governor unilaterally imposed drastic cuts in the hard earned salaries of all the political appointees and civil servants in the State. This was ostensibly to help him finance the ostentatious and lavish ceremony of his daughter's opulent wedding. Having escaped the uproar generated in the popular classes by this wicked decision, the Governor then felt encouraged to audaciously repeat this dastardly feat on a more regular basis.

The workers throughout the State have loudly voiced their strong opposition to these cruel policies. The only viable platform they rely upon to resist this terrible onslaught is the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC). But the NLC has been failing them abysmally with a series of disappointing results that followed their collective efforts to undertake some well organized strike actions to reverse these ugly trends.

Late last year, the suffering workers in the State, rose collectively under the auspices of the State Chapter of the NLC. Their demand was the full implementation of the agreements reached with the State Government for the settlement and prompt payment of their numerous outstanding allowances and other approved benefits. The garrulous Governor blatantly and callously refused to pay. This removed all doubts concerning the charges listed by workers about the several unfulfilled promises he had made. The Governor went further, pleading with workers

and their trade unions in the State to exercise patience and understanding with the clearly contrived problems said to be confronting his government.

Recently, in February, transportation in the State economy was totally brought to a screeching halt. The now ubiquitous commercial tri-cycle riders, otherwise popularly known as "Aadaita sahu", organized a very spectacular state-wide strike action and work stoppage. This was to effectively protest the gross extortions being imposed on their members by the State Government under the guise of so many illegal charges and other spurious licensing claims. The strike was settled the next day with assistance from the NLC, TUC, JNC and Kano Civil Society Forum (KCSF).

Aadaita sahu in Kano

It was also reported, without any rebuttal so far, that workers and political appointees in Kano State, were made to involuntarily cough up a sizable percentage of their hard earned meagre salaries. This was ostensibly to foot the bill for the elaborate and rather menacingly expensive visit paid to the State by the national leader of the ruling Party (APC), the Senator and former Lagos State Governor, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, to mark the occasion of the Senator's 69th birthday.

Similarly, more recently, Governor Umar Ganduje, who now operates with the strange mindset that the Kano State workers are indeed fair game, rudely

Cont'd on page 9

JUSUN: Setting Striking Example In Labour Resistance

Significance of the strike

The Judiciary Staff Union of Nigeria (JUSUN) has distinguished itself in setting a striking example in labour resistance. JUSUN has been on an indefinite strike from Tuesday, 6th April demanding financial autonomy for the judiciary.



Customary Court of Appeal in Makurdi closed due to JUSUN strike

Despite enormous pressures from different quarters that the strike be called off, JUSUN has held its ground. The strike has been overwhelmingly successful on a nationwide basis (except perhaps in Edo State). All levels of courts, including the Magistrates Courts nationwide, have been shut down in obedience to the strike call by JUSUN. Yet, the strike has nothing to do with increase in salary or allowances. It is a strike to enforce observance of express provisions of the Constitution. JUSUN has shown that the rank-and-file union members are eager to strike and fight for good cause in the collective interest, as long as a committed, trusted, and reliable leadership is provided.

The strike has also shown that ordinary working people are capable of uniting for a good cause regardless of primordial differences in ethnicity and religion. All JUSUN members, cutting across all ethnic groups and religious affiliations are united behind the banner of JUSUN – financial autonomy for the judiciary. We commend the JUSUN leadership for a

marvelous refreshing atmosphere of the festival of the unity of the oppressed as against pre-strike tensions along ethnic and religious divides.

Strike Demand

The JUSUN strike has been called for one singular demand: financial autonomy for the judiciary in accordance with the express provisions of the Constitution. As far as the Courts for the Federation and the States are concerned, Sections 81 (3) and 121 (3) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, as amended, respectively, provide that any amount standing to the credit of the judiciary shall be paid directly to the heads of the courts concerned. This should have been implemented with Presidential Order 10 by May 2020, but faced opposition from the state governors.

Disobedience of court orders

Sections 81 (3) and 121(3) of the Constitution have been judicially interpreted in three cases. They are **S u i t N o : FHC/ABJ/CS/667/13: Judiciary Staff Union Of Nigeria vs National Judicial Council & 36 Governors of the States; Suit No. FHC/ABJ/CS/63/2013: Olisa Agbakoba Vs FG, The NJC & National Assembly; and Suit No. NAD/56/2013: Olisa Agbakoba Vs A.G., Ekiti State & 2 Others.**

The failure and refusal of the state governments to observe the Constitutional provisions as well as the courts' pronouncements is fundamentally unconstitutional. It is indeed an aberration, signifying continuation of impunity and lawlessness by the ruling class. If the houses of assemblies of the states were truly independent, they ought to have set in motion, the process of impeaching the governors who have refused to observe these constitutional provisions.

In the circumstances, the only weapon available to whip the state governments into line, within constitutional provisions, is strike

action by JUSUN.

Popular support

The JUSUN strike has received popular support. Many branches of the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA) have protested in the streets in JUSUN support. Other branches are carrying out 'protest by leadership visits to the Governors on weekly basis' as directed by the national leadership of the NBA. JUSUN has also organized protests supported by the public. These have included protests in Abuja outside the Court of Appeal and in several other states on Monday, 19th April and in front of the High Court in Ibadan on Thursday, 22nd April, for example.

Prospects for victory

The Chair of the Governors Forum, Governor Kayode Fayemi, has publicly announced that financial autonomy would be observed as from May 2021. However, JUSUN should not call off the strike until financial autonomy is observed, in reality. For this reason it is unfortunate that JUSUN in Lagos State has relaxed the strike for three days a week as a result of kind words from the governor. We should learn to believe what the ruling class does, not what it says. The thirty thousand naira minimum wage is yet to be implemented since April 2019 when it was passed into law. Only the continued pressure of strike action can compel the ruling class to be lawful and actually implement its promises.

Lack of Financial autonomy is related to corruption in the Judiciary

There is a relationship between corruption in the judiciary and lack of financial autonomy for the judiciary. Where the heads of the courts are compelled to beg the governors for what has been budgeted for the courts, many of the governors are likely to use that opportunity to ask for favours from the courts. The Chief Justice of Nigeria has recently pointed

out this tendency. *By Femi Aborisade* In other words, the source of corruption in the judiciary is mainly from the executive arms of government who starve the judiciary of funds. Therefore, the fight for financial autonomy for the judiciary is also a fight to reduce corruption in the judiciary.

Room for improvement

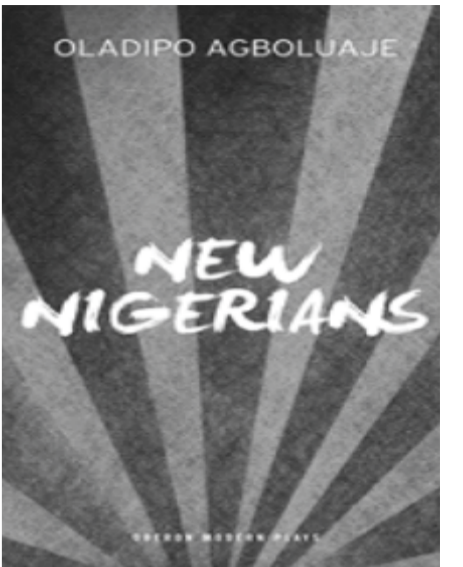
While commending the JUSUN leadership for the conduct of the strike so far, we encourage JUSUN to adopt more active methods of strike which involve the initiatives of the rank and file. In this regard, more street protests should be organized at grassroots levels so that other workers from other unions may have an opportunity to show solidarity in action. JUSUN should also be holding townhall meetings in various states to explain the reasons for their strike to other trade unionists and the general public.

In addition, JUSUN should be demanding real solidarity from the wider trade union movement. JUSUN is a member of the NLC and so it is unfortunate that more active solidarity has not been provided. As a minimum, NLC and its member trade unions should be mobilizing their members to support JUSUN protests in the various states. JUSUN should also be requesting further action from the NLC if this dispute is not settled in the shortest possible time.



High Court, Benue State, JUSUN shut down activities

A REVIEW OF “NEW NIGERIANS” BY OLADIPO AGBOLUAJE



The play “New Nigerians” is a timely, cynical satire about the state of Nigerian politics. In the uncanny way that art sometimes mirrors life, the current political situation in Nigeria is very much analogous to some of the issues dealt with in this play.

The main protagonist, Greatness Ogholi, is the presidential candidate of the People's Revolutionary Party. We first meet him giving a rather bombastic quasi-Fanonian speech about the ills that plague the nation and how only he, “the man of integrity” can bring change. We soon learn that “Greatness” is not great and he is far from being “a man of integrity”. His running mate, Chinasa, regularly smokes Indian hemp and Greatness himself is partial to a few tokes of a spliff or two. Furthermore, he has declared himself presidential candidate without clearing it with his party HQ.

Greatness is the sort of messianic left-wing figure that substitutes himself for the struggles of the working and oppressed classes, especially in societies like Nigeria where the institutions that mediate between the state and “civil society” are weak. Such personages take on an outsized social role and perceive everything they do as the struggle.

The action mainly takes place at the Transcorp Hilton in Abuja, a monument to the folly and extravagance of the Nigerian ruling class.

The reality of electoral politics demands that alliances be forged, compromises made and deals struck to win elections. Greatness attempts to forge alliances first with a representative of the ruling classes Danladi and later with a trade union bureaucrat, Edobor, who is quite open about his historical mission: to mediate between the forces of labour and capital. However, like all trade union bureaucrats, Edobor inevitably betrays labour whilst allowing capital to get away with murder.

Danladi and Edobor both drive hard bargains for their support. In an attempt to strike a deal with Danladi, Greatness is prepared to betray the interests of his running mate, Chinasa. The whole façade of being “a man of integrity” begins to crumble.

The play takes flight during the confrontation between Greatness and Edobor, one of the best dramatic summaries I have seen or read of the arguments for reform versus revolution. The hand of corruption follows Greatness everywhere he seeks alliances: with the notorious Dr. Awobokiri of the lecturer's union, the man who now demands cash instead of sex from female students for his university course handouts. There are a few poignant moments in the play especially in the scenes between Greatness and his wife Grace that deal with the contribution of activism to the breakdown of bourgeois family life.

Despite the serious issues tackled in this play, it is

extremely humorous, with gags flying around thick and furious. An example: “you cannot build an ideological base without first building stomach infrastructure. A hungry revolutionary is a capitalist in waiting”.

At the very end of the play, the playwright reveals what he considers to be the way forward for the liberation of Nigeria and the African world. Rather than the messianic personages of the like of Greatness Ogholi spouting revolutionary rhetoric, but ready to betray the interests of their followers at every turn, the future is “young Africans from all corners, organizing themselves, sharing ideas on how to implement lasting change. With a little more dialectic it will become the new Pan-Africanism”. In short, the future is working class self-organisation from below, something that this paper never ceases to advocate.

If you wish to spend a few hours being educated and entertained, there is no better way doing that than going to watch or read this play. Highly recommended.

For an interview with the playwright see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PIpSKRp4dfQ>
To obtain a copy of the play see: <https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/new-nigerians-9781786821379>

KANO STATE: NLC CALLED OFF POPULAR STRIKE BUT WORKERS VOW TO CONTINUE FIGHT FOR MINIMUM WAGE

ordered that payment of the agreed N30, 600 be stopped and reversed to the old rate for the March salaries. He insisted, falsely, that his government had recorded a sharp fall in its normal monthly inflows from both the Federation and IGR sources.

However, contrary to the Governor's assertion, credible sources confirmed that rather than suffering from any diminution in revenues, the coffers of the State have been witnessing steady and remarkable increases in the last six months. A casual glance at the sudden rise in the price of crude oil in the global market would readily confirm that the nation has earned an additional 50% increase from the benchmark crude oil price denoted in the 2021 Federal budget plan.

Needless to mention that in his desire to court the cheap support of Kano people, the Governor has been loquaciously and ecstatically flaunting the sharp rise being recorded by his government in the realms of Internally Generated Revenue (IGR), to aid his government's performance efforts. Improved collection of land tax on

large properties could double the State's level of IGR collection the former Emir of Kano, Sanusi claims.

It is therefore self evident, that both by his own personal account and going also by the sudden rise in the crude oil price and local revenues, the Governor rather unfortunately, has not been very open, transparent and sincere in sharing information on public finances with the people of the State.

But, the most disheartening aspects of all these sordid happenings, is clearly the dishonourable role the trade union leaders, especially the NLC at the



centre, have been playing in literally allowing the State government to escape with “murder”.

The valiant and heroic workers of

What Northerner benefitted from Buhari Administration? Appointments doesn't mean being benefitted at all, Most of the northern States suffered a lot with terrorism, Bandits, Kidnapping, Child Abuse, Abuse of Office, Workers Sacked without benefits and other vices affecting North while a northerner leading the country. North benefit nothing from this present government no Touchable project to see by this administration. If you are not in the north you can say anything about the region. —Ali Attahiru, Chair CDHR, Kaduna

put forward by the unions.

As a consequence of this act of betrayal, the normally boisterous working class social activities have started manifesting slowing down in organizational meetings, workers participation and despondency.

This negative trend must be checkmated and swiftly arrested through mass action and conscious interventions by workers, in order to guarantee the eventual triumph of the working class over the retrogressive forces who are presently busy siphoning workers' hard earned salaries for the indefensible satisfaction of their corrupt and parasitic lifestyles.



The latest backsliding tactics of the trade unions came out clearly when the strike action called to resist the non-payment of the prevailing minimum wage became abruptly suspended without achieving any of the demands

The Case Against Privatization

Massive public investments in public enterprises

Between 1975 and 1995, the Federal Government alone spent \$100billion on public enterprises and that on an annual basis, public enterprises consumed about N200billion of national resources by way of grants, subsidies, import duty waivers, tax exemptions, and the like. A colossal investment in public enterprises evidences.

With the 1986 formal introduction of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), a major component was commercialization and privatization. This was a contradictory phenomenon as, on the one hand, government declared its intention to divest from public enterprises and on the other hand, huge resources continued to be pumped into the same enterprises under the guise of making them attractive to investors.

Overview of Privatization Programme

The first exercise started in 1988 under the Babangida regime. This phase ended in 1993. The programme identified 111 public enterprises to be fully or partially privatized and 34 others including NNPC, NEPA, NITEL for commercialization. In the end, between 55 and 82 enterprises were privatized and subventions were withdrawn from some commercialized enterprises.

The programme generated only a paltry sum of around N3.5bn. Obviously, the privatized public enterprises were ridiculously undervalued. The Senior Staff Association of Statutory Corporations and Government Owned Companies (SSASCGOC) in a joint advertisement with the junior staff union, the National Union of Postal and Telecommunications Employees (2001) had cause to condemn the then Director General of the BPE, El-Rufai, for saying that the over 500 buildings and land owned by the Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (NITEL) all over the country would not be reckoned with in determining the value of NITEL.

Government also divested interest in nine banks – eight of them were sold by public offer and one by private placement. The eight banks were Union Bank, Afribank, United Bank for Africa, Savannah Bank, International Merchant Bank, NAL Merchant Bank and Merchant Bank of Nigeria.

There was no privatization exercise throughout the Abacha period, between 1993 and 1998. Rather, government adopted the policy of a 10-year contract-leasing programme. By this programme, the lessees were to have unfettered use of the facilities of the enterprises and the Federal Government was only to share a percentage of profits and foreign exchange earnings declared by private companies that won contracts to manage the affected enterprises.

Second phase of privatization

The second phase of the privatization programme was initiated in 1998 by General Abdulsalami Abubakar shortly before he handed over power. This embraced the major infrastructure and public utilities omitted in the first programme. This included public enterprises such as the railways, ports, NIPOST, Savannah Sugar.

The implementation of the second major phase of privatization actually started with President Obasanjo in 1999. A total of 101 companies were privatized between 1999 to May 2006. The Proceeds

realised from 52 of them amounted to less than N50bn.

In many cases many of the new owners did not even pay the full value of the already low bid prices. So this was nothing but looting of public heritage in the name of privatization.

Legal protection for beneficiaries of privatization Fearing resistance against privatization at one time or

of privatization sampled 41 companies and found that 'six of the privatized companies had folded up while five became moribund' (2006).

This process is continuing, for example in the electricity distribution companies (that were NEPA), excuses are still being found to retrench older staff and where necessary replacing them with younger staff who are paid less.



the other and in different forms, the Federal Government put in place legal protection for private capital and investments in privatized companies against nationalization or expropriation.

Job destruction under privatization

In preparation for privatisation, massive retrenchment was undertaken in public enterprises to remove "bloated" and over-staffing levels. For example, in the Nigerian Railways staff numbers were progressively brought down from about 45,000 in the 1970s to less than 14,000 by natural attrition as well as retrenchment.

I want to say with every emphasis I can muster that civil society organizations, NGOs, that are not rooted in mass politics are at best a palliative, are at best some form of Band-Aid for the open, festering sores of mass poverty and dispossession in our continent.

—Biodun Jeyifo (2006)

Conclusions

As socialists, we are fundamentally opposed to privatisation. This is because it is a means of looting public infrastructure and providing the corrupt elite with further ways of enriching themselves. We believe that it is fundamentally unfair that public enterprises developed and extended with public funds should be provided to private individuals at prices that do not reflect these historic public investments.

We are also concerned that privatisation results in further attacks on public jobs and conditions of service. We do not believe that public enterprises like NEPA and NITEL were islands of socialism. But they were protected, to a certain extent, from the ravages of the market.

It was possible for electricity and telephones to be provided at prices that were not dictated by the need to maximise profits. In addition, in many cases public enterprises allowed trade unions to organise and to negotiate more freely than is the case in the private sector. In addition, privatisation has led to the loss of many jobs and increased the level of unemployment.

We believe that the relevant trade unions, the NLC and TUC should be leading a campaign against the proposed privatisations. In addition, many privatised companies, especially those in the electricity sector should be brought back into the public sector. This could allow electricity to be provided as a public good rather than just to make profits for a few.

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Would harsher punishment help to protect women? – Tina Ndi

There was widespread outrage following the murder of a 22-year-old university student in a church where she was studying in Benin City. Her family say she was brutally raped and bludgeoned to death. There have been many cases of the same sorts of crime in recent years.

Could harsher penalties and making sexual harassment a crime keep women safer? Some people think so. Others want harsher sentences for existing crimes such as rape, sexual assault and domestic violence. In 2019, the Senate, for example, debated introducing the death penalty for rape.

The Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act, 2015 prohibits all forms of violence against all persons in private and public life. Applicable in the FCT, similar laws have been passed in Anambra, Bauchi, Ekiti, Kaduna and Oyo and 10 other states. It includes provisions to help ensure perpetrators are brought to justice, and survivors are adequately supported. It has not been passed by many northern states, nor most of those in the Niger Delta region.

The Penal Code applicable in the north, explicitly states that sexual intercourse by a man with his wife is not rape. In September last year Kaduna State made castration and death the penalty for raping a child under the age of 14 years.

The problem is that such laws and associated penalties make prosecution more difficult. There are many problems

with how the Nigerian police and legal system responds to rape cases, Inibehe Effiong, a Nigerian human rights lawyer said. "A regular police officer will treat cases of rape with levity. They will demand the victim fund the investigation through bribing".



Protesters hold placards outside the Nigerian Police headquarters in Abuja during a demonstration for awareness about sexual violence on June 5, 2020. KOLA'S LAIMON/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Even when cases are prosecuted, they're almost impossible to win. The law requires corroborating physical evidence, and this, says Effiong, "cannot be achieved without the necessary infrastructure, technology and [forensic] science".

A culture of silence around rape is a key

obstacle. In the most recent national demographic and health survey (2018), 9% of women aged 15–49 said that they had experienced sexual violence in their lifetimes, with 4% reporting it as an experience over the previous year.

These figures suggest that in 2017 there were at least 1.6 million women who had recently survived sexual violence. But the police recorded fewer than 2,300 cases of rape and indecent assault in the same period, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. Even worse, this resulted in no convictions!

The results of a survey published by NOI Polls in July 2019 suggested that the real

situation could be much worse. It found that up to one in every three women in Nigeria could have experienced at least one form of sexual assault by the time they reach 25 years old. This poll also indicated a significant drop in the number of rape cases reported to the police over the previous five years (see: [https://noi-](https://noi-polls.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/RAPE-REPORT-1.pdf)

[polls.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/RAPE-REPORT-1.pdf](https://noi-polls.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/RAPE-REPORT-1.pdf)).

Other research has shown that many assaults are carried out by family members or close acquaintances. The majority of the survivors know their rapists. Nigeria's society thinks of every female rape victim as a lesser woman. A woman who is no longer fit for marriage – so this reduces the level of such crimes being reported.

Harsher

It may be tempting to support the demands for harsher penalties. After all, short sentences for rape seem to send a message that women aren't worth protecting. And if men can harass women without fear of arrest, surely that encourages them to carry on?

Yet there is limited evidence that harsher punishment will deter offenders long term or reduce overall crime. Instead, harsher laws and giving the police more powers and this could make women less safe.

Prison doesn't stop crime because crime reflects social problems rooted in the unequal, oppressive and violent world we live in.

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YOUNG WOMEN DETAINED SINCE #EndSARS in October

Two young women, Kemisola Ogunniyi and Ayodele Bukunmi, were among four suspects accused of looting and burning the Ondo Secretariat of the All Progressives Congress (APC) during the #EndSARS protests. They are still in detention with two young men, Ani Obinna, and Ojo Samuel.

It is over five months since 17-year-old Kemisola Ogunniyi was arrested and detained at the Surulere Prison, Akure, Ondo State. Her parents are saying the illegal detention of their child has caused more wreck and tears for the family.

On October 24, 2020, Kemisola was whisked to the State Criminal Investigation Department in Ondo, while going to get drugs for her sick mother. She was accused of having connections with #EndSARS protesters who burned the All Progressive Congress (APC) secretariat in the state. She was charged with arson, among other offences.

Before then, on October 21, rampaging youth had attacked the Akure APC secretariat and set the edifice ablaze. The youth claiming to be #EndSARS protesters had defied the 24-hour curfew imposed by the state governor to mount roadblocks across the streets of Akure.

Following the incident, security operatives in the state indiscriminately raided the streets of Akure in the name of arresting the culprits. Kemisola and others were arrested as part of the process.

"She was not an EndSARS protester; she never protested," Mrs Felicia Ogunniyi, Kemisola's mother said. "We've spent a lot to secure her release but we couldn't; her father lost his job over her matter and we've lost all we had on this case. Please help us."

Corroborating, Kemisola's father, Mr. Rotimi Ogunniyi, said the case has wrecked him financially and mentally. He added that he has spent every dime he has on the matter.

"In fact, it has been a while since we last visited her in prison because we have nothing to offer her," he said.



Kaduna State Government Retrenches Thousands

the year, 40% of the state debt was borrowed from wages. Similarly, N132bn of the N152 bn capital spend by the state during 2019 was borrowed from wages!

That is nearly 90% of capital spending by the state was financed from unpaid salaries, pensions etc. The State may be borrowing from China, the World Bank etc to fund urban renewal, but the state is also illegally 'borrowing' from its workers to fund almost all of its capital expenditure.

The mass retrenchments and 'borrowings' from wages may have had a detrimental effect on security in the state. It cannot be a coincidence that the state with the highest level of sackings also has one of the worst insecurity records. Loss of income makes people desperate.

A modern state can only be built by a well-motivated workforce. Decent health and education services can only be provided by nurses and teachers who have confidence in the Government, know they will be paid at the end of the month, are not living in fear of losing their jobs and believe that they will receive their pensions on time after they retire.

Kaduna State Government is boasting that it paid the N30,000 minimum wage by September 2019 – five months after it became law. How many landlords or schools would accept for the rent or school fees to be paid five months late and then the unpaid dues never to be paid? The amount of wages and salaries actually paid in 2019 was less than 10% more than the year before, so taking inflation into account, the wage bill fell with the introduction of the new minimum wage.

Kaduna State seems to have fully accepted the ethos of Neoliberalism. It believes the rich and business people have to be handsomely rewarded and incentivised to 'invest' in the state. In contrast, the workers have to be paid the lowest possible salaries, beaten into submission and periodically terrorised by mass sackings. NLC, TUC and the individual trades unions need to be leading a fight back against these attacks.

Cont'd from page 3

Who Can't Afford a Minimum wage of N30,000?

Some governors are claiming that their states cannot afford to pay the minimum wage of N30,000. So, for example, The Nation on Sunday, 18th April ran with the headline "States in panic mode as revenues tumble". The problem is that this is just not true!

All states are now receiving massively higher incomes than when the minimum wage was previously increased, especially in terms of naira. In addition, states are collecting much higher levels of their own revenue (IGR). In contrast, because of inflation, the minimum wage now buys much less than before. Finally every time the naira is devalued the government receives more naira for each dollar it receives from selling crude oil.

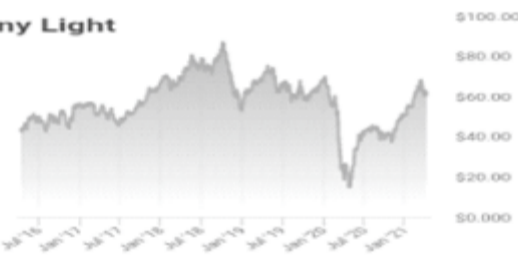
FAAC Allocations Increasing

In 1998 crude oil sold for less than \$12 a barrel, it is now selling for more than five times as much. In 1998, the minimum wage of N3,000 was worth about \$137, by 2011 the then minimum wage of N18,000 was worth only \$112. N30,000 is now worth only \$79.

Since 2011, when the N18,000 minimum wage was introduced, officially inflation has been 300%. Most prices are now at least three times higher than they were a decade ago. So we need a minimum wage of at least N54,000 just to be able to afford to buy the same as we could in 2011.

During 2020 the states received oil income of 93% of the amount for the previous year, despite Covid-19, and now they are getting even more. This year the monthly FAAC allocations to the states have been higher each month and this trend is expected to continue as the international price of crude oil is now back to its pre-Covid levels. The price is now well over \$60 a barrel or over 50% higher than the bench-mark oil price included in the 2021 Federal budget of only \$40.

Bonny Light



Increases in Own Revenue

In 2020 the 36 states collected their own revenues (Internally Generated Revenue – IGR) of almost N1,220 billion this compares to only just over N500 billion in 2011. So over the last decade these revenues have increased by almost two and a half times. OK, because of the lockdowns associated with Covid-19, this revenue did dip slightly in 2020 compared to the previous year - by less than 2%. But these revenues have increased by nearly 250% on average over the last decade when the minimum wage increased from N18,000 to N30,000. An increase of only just over 65%.

Federal Government owed massive funds

In addition, ASCAB has shown that the Federal Government is owed massive amounts of money. Enough to fund total Federal spending for at least five years as the following table shows:

Organisation	Explanation	Amount (N billion)
Government Owned Enterprises	Unremitted operating surpluses as at August 2018. Worst offender is Petroleum Products Pricing Regulatory Agency https://www.premiumtimesng.com/business/business-news/301820-cbn-pppra-other-nigerian-agencies-fail-to-remitt-n10-trillion-surplus-official.html	10, 000
Asset Management Corporation of Nigeria (AMCON)	The Asset Management Corporation of Nigeria (AMCON) seeking special tribunals to try those owing it N5.4 trillion (April 2021). https://thenigerialawyer.com/n5-4tr-debt-amcon-seeks-special-tribunals-to-try-debtors/	5, 400
International Oil Companies in Nigeria	Attorney General is seeking \$62 billion from oil companies under regulations that allow the government to revisit revenue-sharing deals on petroleum sales if crude prices exceed \$20 a barrel. Converted at N380 to the dollar. https://mobile.reuters.com/article/amp/idUSKBN1WP21H	23, 560
International Oil Companies in Nigeria	Nigeria is suing several major oil companies for \$12.7 billion of oil allegedly exported illegally to the United States between 2011 and 2014. Converted at N380 to the dollar. https://www.arabnews.pk/node/987276/economy	4,826
Theft of funds for arms purchases	The Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, has disclosed that the real amount misappropriated in the arms purchase is \$15 billion. https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2016/05/11/real-amount-diverted-in-arms-purchase-was-15bn-says-information-minister/amp/	5,700
Department of Petroleum Resources	Unremitted revenue of N1. 9tn in 2019. Projected total revenue of N4.3tn in 2021. https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/08/dpr-under-fire-in-senate-over-n44-5bn-remittance-out-of-n2-4trn-generated/	1, 900
NLNG owned by Federal Government and oil companies	In November 2020, The Revenue Mobilisation Allocation and Fiscal Commission (RMAFC) reported to the House of Representatives Public Accounts Committee that, "\$21.686 billion revenue that accrued into the NLNG dividend account from 1999 to 2020". Converted at N380 to the dollar. https://businesstraffic.com.ng/rmaf-c-accuses-nmpc-of-failing-to-remitt-21-billion-to-federation-account/	8,360
NNPC remittance of crude sales	The 2015/2016 audited accounts of the Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) shows it failed to remit N4.07trillion revenue from domestic crude oil sales. https://m.guardian.ng/business-services/nnp-c-yet-to-remitt-n4-07-trillion-from-2015-2016-crude-sales/amp/ Another N3.2 trillion not remitted to the Federal Government in 2014. https://mobile.reuters.com/article/amp/idUSL5N16M4TQ	7,270
14 Nigerian banks	There is no confirmation that the 14 banks have repaid the \$7bn given to them in October 2006 by the CBN. Converted at N380 to the dollar. https://www.tori.ng/amp/42602/wheres-the-7billion-placed-in-14-banks-by-soludo-b.html	2,660
TOTAL (N billion)		69,676

Workers cannot afford to live

It is workers that cannot afford to do without the full minimum wage. Legally, it should have been increased every five years – unlike electricity prices that are reviewed twice a year. So after the 2011 increase there should have been further increases in 2016 and another this year. With inflation at over 10% a year and we need the minimum wage to be increased each year just to keep pace with inflation.

We need to go further and increase the real level of the minimum wage. This is needed to move away from the high levels of poverty and associated corruption and insecurity. Before the Covid-19 pandemic started, in 2019, the National Bureau of Statistics found that 40% of the population were existing below the poverty line. The lock-downs, dip in oil prices and so FAAC allocations made this much worse. Surveys by the Centre for Economic Policy Research

in 2020 found that 60% of the adult population were suffering from moderate or severe food insecurity. This fantastic level of abject poverty almost certainly explains the significant rise in insecurity of various forms over the last year and more.

This is why all workers in all states need to be paid a minimum wage of at least N30,000 with another large increase this year. This would still only enable them to buy the same amount of food as they used to be able to afford a decade ago.

Any governors that say that they cannot afford to pay a paltry minimum wage of N30,000 are clearly lying. They cannot be allowed to get away with such an outrageous level of dishonesty. We need a major fight back and concerted trade union activity to reduce poverty and the associated corruption and insecurity.



Forbes Magazine unveiled at the beginning of April its ranking of billionaires for 2020. This confirms that Covid-19 is not a crisis for everyone and that the fortunes of billionaires are breaking all records: the wealth of the 20 richest people on the planet increased by 62% between March 2020 and March 2021!

From the Biden administration to the IMF, calls for taxation of the rich and multinationals are growing. Unfortunately, the Nigerian government still refuses to make the profiteers of the crisis pay.

THE CASE AGAINST PRIVATIZATION

- Femi Aborisade

Privatization essentially refers to selling public bodies, public enterprises to private owners.

Economic and financial reasons are usually the formal reasons declared by governments for privatization. The current Government, for example, claims it will help to finance this year's budget through proceeds from privatisation of some public assets which has been put at around N200 billion. Planned sales include, the Integrated Power Plants in Geregu, Omotosho, and Calabar, the National Arts Theatre and the River Basin Development Authorities. In addition, the National Stadium in Lagos, the Moshood Abiola Stadium, Abuja, and two others are pegged for concessioning.

Privatisation Is Political

In reality, however, the key reasons for privatization in Nigeria are political and ideological - to transfer resources from the public to the private sector. If economic reasons alone determine which companies to be privatized, then, companies that are self-financing and generate additional funds for government should not have been included in the list of companies to be privatized.

This was eloquently captured by Nasir Ahmad el-Rufai, the then Director General of Nigeria's Bureau of Public Enterprises. In 2001, he stated: "Privatization is inevitable – state capitalism has failed, and is outdated and unsustainable. Globalization is at our door step – unless we act

quickly and decisively, we will surely be left behind even more than where we are now".

The National Council on Privatisation, in 2000, identified the primary goal of privatisation and commercialisation as – "to make the private sector the leading engine of growth of the Nigerian economy and to reintegrate Nigeria back into the



global economy, as a platform to attract foreign direct investment".

In the history of Nigeria, from the colonial up to 1980, five main development plans had been formulated and implemented, through which the public enterprises being privatised today were built up through equity interests, loans, grants and subventions.

Before 1986, about 1,500 public enterprises existed in Nigeria - 600 at the Federal level and 900 smaller ones were at state/local government levels.

All that started to change in July 1986 when the policy of privatization was formally declared. What is important to stress is that the process leading to the paradigm shift from state centrism to the private sector being the engine of economic growth was not an inevitable phenomenon. In fact, it is a recent phenomenon.

The process of change from 'state capitalism' to 'rolling back the state' did not occur on its own accord. Unlike Adam Smith, the direction of the economy is not simply influenced by the invisible hand of the market (i.e. the forces of supply and demand). Rather, supply and demand are influenced by conscious social policies in the process of social interaction or class struggles. Hence, Marx talks of political economy, i.e. economy that is influenced by political decisions and state-civil society relationships.

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Pensioners plan nationwide protest for pension increment

Members of the Nigeria Union of Pensioners were planning to embark on a massive nationwide protest over the failure of the government to increase their pension.

Outgoing President of the NUP, Abel Afolayan, disclosed this in Abuja at the 11th quadrennial delegate conference of the union. He said his members would ground the Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation during the protest.

Afolayan told newsmen that the union had issued to the federal government an ultimatum on the protest but nothing has been done, insisting that the pensioners cannot continue to languish in abject poverty amidst rising prices of daily needs.

"We are protesting because they have refused to release the letter of pension increment consequential

upon the minimum wage and salary adjustment to workers, two years after that was done.

"The welfare of pensioners are still terrible. The pensioners are not being treated well at all. Many pensioners are suffering. Some earn as low as N5,000 and they are not being paid as and when due. Even as we speak now, the pension increase, consequential upon the national minimum wage and salary adjustment, is yet to be effected two years after those of the workers have been done."



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