



Martha Tinny MOLEMA
President
Présidente

Joel Akhator ODIGIE
General Secretary
Secrétaire Général

Route Internationale d'Atakpamé
Centre FOPADESC Agoè – Nyivé
B.P. : 4401 LOME - TOGO

Tel.: 00228 22 25 03 90
Email : info@ituc-africa.org
Web: www.ituc-africa.org

H.E. Bola Ahmed Tinubu,
President of the Federal Republic
of Nigeria
Aso Rock
Abuja

18 December 2023

Dear Mr President,

**Worsening labour rights issues and the attack on the President of the Nigeria Labour Congress:
Concerns about the lack of progress towards redress and fair closure**

Your Excellency,

I trust this message finds you well.

As representatives of the African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa: <https://www.ituc-africa.org/>), encompassing 101 affiliates across 52 African nations, including the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC) of Nigeria, we urgently highlight our growing concern and dismay over unresolved industrial relations issues impacting Nigerian workers, especially the case of the brutal assault of the President of the NLC, Comrade Joe Ajaero and the interference in trade union administration by governments.

The regrettable incident in Imo State on 1 November 2023, resulting in the violent attack on workers, including Comrade Joe Ajaero, President of the Nigeria Labour Congress and his abduction, remain alarming violations of human rights and a direct affront to justice, democracy, and the rule of law.

The African trade union movement views this attack as very troubling, given the stature of the NLC and its commendable roles in advancing working-class solidarity and contributions to the continent's development and shared prosperity. This attack is an insult to the African trade union movement. It is unacceptable and condemnable.

Further, Mr President, as you are aware, the NLC and TUC had planned to undertake a nationwide strike to press for a thorough investigation and unravelling of the circumstances surrounding the dastardly attack on peaceful protesters. Our Nigerian affiliates reliably informed us that your government took a timely and commendable step to extend an olive branch to the NLC and TUC, appealing for calling off the strike action to pave the way for social dialogue. Sadly, despite the trade unions' show of good faith by calling off the strike, there is no traction towards justice to date.

Mr President, during the recently concluded 5th Delegates Congress of the ITUC-Africa, which took place in Nairobi, Kenya, from 28 to 30 November 2023, delegates decided that our

organisation take renewed steps towards the defence, protection and promotion of human and trade union rights. The case of the NLC President and the plight of workers in Nigeria were considered, among other issues, urgent matters that the ITUC-Africa must follow up judiciously.

Given these sad developments and the worsening industrial relations, our appeal demands the following actions:

1. **Immediate Commencement of Social Dialogue and Negotiations:** We urge immediate initiation of genuine and results-oriented social dialogue negotiations with social partners: government, employers and trade unions. It is also essential that agreements as products of the talks are faithfully and timely implemented.
2. **Intervention in Clearing Arrears:** Immediate intervention to clear the many months salary and pension arrears owed to public sector workers and pensioners in the country, including Imo State.
3. **Guarantee swift and thorough investigation into the bestial attack on the NLC President:** we reiterate our call for a genuine and thorough investigation into the circumstances surrounding the attack on the NLC President. We call on the government to ensure proper medical treatment for Comrade Joe Ajaero's injuries and provide adequate compensation for the damages suffered, respecting his social, physical, and psychological well-being. The perpetrators of the attacks must be investigated, prosecuted and sanctioned. *African workers have resolved to stage continent-wise picketing of Nigerian embassies and other politico-economic interests if, after 30 days, no apparent signs of progress in this manner are recorded.*
4. **Upholding Rights and Ensuring Safety:** Uphold Nigerian workers' and trade union leaders' fundamental rights and freedoms, including taking transparent steps to safeguard civil liberty spaces, especially the enjoyment of freedom of association. In particular, the Lagos State Government must return the Road Transport Employers Association of Nigeria (RTEAN) premises and refrain from interfering in its administration. The Nigerian Police must also refrain from lending itself to be used by vested interests to take over the leadership of the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW).
5. **Meaningful Dialogue and Respect for Agreements:** Engage in a meaningful dialogue with the Nigeria Labour Congress and its leaders to address the legitimate concerns of Nigerian workers, respecting negotiated agreements and decisions.

We emphasise the crucial need for these measures to arrest the decline in civility concerning industrial relations and to prevent the misuse of power for resolving disputes. Mr President, your intervention as the Chief Security Officer is vital to upholding the rule of law and restoring order in the country's industrial landscape. Therefore, Mr President, we urge you to use your good offices and available instruments of office to cause satisfactory closure to these matters.

As we eagerly await a positive response to these pressing demands, Mr President, we ask that you accept the assurances of high regard.

Yours sincerely,



Akhator Joel ODIGIE,
General Secretary, ITUC-Africa