

PRESS RELEASE

DEMOCRACY AT CROSS ROAD IN KOGI STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

The reported in the media yesterday the 23rd March, 2023, of suspension of Nine (9) Honourable members of Kogi State House of Assembly and Seven (7) Local Government Chairmen and some Vice Chairmen, is worrisome and dangerous to democratic development. While the legislators are supposed to be independent arms of government that set out its own rules and procedure, the recent development where members are suspended at random, call for caution, as legislators are elected to represent their constituencies, any suspensions carried out on any of them legitimately or otherwise has reflection and impact on the constituencies they represent.

More worrisome and condemnable, is when Local Government Chairmen heading another arms of government entirely has suspended, based on correspondence or complained from the Executive arms of government and by extension Chairman of political party is disturbing. Chairmen of Local Government were given suspension ahead of any committee reports is worrisome in the democratic dispensation we find ourselves. What then should be the role of legislators at the Local Government level popularly refer to or call counsellors?

It should be noted that Nigeria presently practice Federalism with three tiers of Government in which each work independently as provided for in the Nigeria Constitution and relevant laws in Nigeria. ***The fundamental question is, can a national chairman of a party and the president of Federal Republic of Nigeria complain to the National Assembly against any governor in Nigeria and such governor will be out-rightly suspended by the National Assembly?***

Legislative institutions are created by law to make laws and to uphold the rule of Law, and Kogi State House of Assembly cannot be exceptional. All its activities must follow the rule of law and democratic principles. Elected legislators and Local Government Chairmen are Elected by the generality of the citizens that goes beyond political parties, particularly on Election Days as just been witnessed in the immediate past election of 2023 in Nigeria. As after the party primaries, the electorates or voters choose who represent them at various level. Therefore, the

political platform through which a candidate emerged, can no longer determine solely the destiny of such elected individuals in the name of Anti-party activities.

Where a crime or criminality has been established, reports should have been made to relevant security agencies for proper investigation and prosecution, as everybody is presumed innocent until proven guilty by court of Law under the constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Before any local government chairman can be removed, the legislative arm of such Local Government should have played a verifiable role, by carrying out their own legislative investigations as prescribed by law, and reports are made to the State Assembly in our own opinion. All reports made available to the public, doesn't indicate such processes have been followed.

We call on the Kogi State House of Assembly not to turn itself to a unit or department under government house in Kogi State, we call on governor that is democratically put in place to respect democratic principles and due process in all his activities, including dealing with all citizens of Kogi State.

Signed:

Idris Miliki Abdul,

Executive Director,

Conscience for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution (CHRCR),

Lokoja, Kogi State.

Date: 24th March, 2023