



NIGERIA LABOUR CONGRESS

MOTTO: LABOUR CREATES WEALTH

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PRESS STATEMENT

AVOIDABLE DEATH OF OUR YOUTHS

We are saddened and shocked to learn of the avoidable passing away of over 20 unemployed youths during the course of an ill-fated recruitment exercise conducted yesterday by the Nigerian Immigration Service. In Abuja and Lagos and in several other towns across Nigeria, an army of unemployed of about a million youths thronged the venues, in what has now turned out to be a do or die struggle to procure employment.

The explanation by the Minister of Interior, Abba Morro that 520,000 applicants were invited for screening for 4,556 spaces and that the applicants died in a stampede due to impatient and non-adherence to lay down orderly procedure, is rather weak and untenable. To invite so much applicant for such few spaces, in all sense of administration was a call to anarchy and highly irresponsible of the immigration services.

We condemn in the strongest terms possible, the recruitment protocols adopted by the Immigration department. It is grossly unfair for the Immigration department to have invited over thousands of our youths to physically present themselves to compete to fill a miserly four thousand vacancies. Nothing but crass opportunism can explain this heartless scam. A more rational and discerning recruitment process, could easily have reduced the numbers by insisting on raising minimum standards. The Immigration Department willfully refused to employ this option in order to maximize the opportunity to bleed the applicants, each of whom, was asked to pay one thousand Naira.

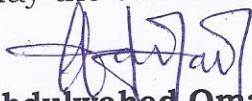
This follows a condemnable pattern, which has now become common, even in the private sector, where thousands of applicants, are invited in droves to compete for extremely limited opportunities. Ordinarily objectionable, this rogue method of head hunting, must count as execrable in the extreme, when adopted by a reputable department of government. This corporate conduct fills us with disgust and we hereby call on government to provide greater protection

for the unemployed, vulnerable as they may seem. The current environment leaves them open to serial abuses, and the deaths which have resulted from the Immigration exercise, are an extreme indication, of a widespread dysfunction, and crass incompetence of government agencies.

We also demand that the Federal Government must authorize an investigation of the Nigerian Immigration Service, query the methods it adopted and interrogate the discretion it exercised in collecting money from hard pressed applicants.

It is also important to remind Government of the danger that unemployment, particularly unemployment of qualified youths, represents. Unemployment at the current scale, is a grave challenge to the status quo and should shatter the complacency that many of us feel. The specter of over 80,000 youths in a stadium in Abuja, assembled, not to watch an A- list football match, but rather, challenged by an epic hunger to have something to do, must break all hearts. We therefore call on government to tackle unemployment with increased commitment, and appropriately sanction those who have had a hand in causing these scandalous deaths.

May the soul of the dead youths rest in peace.


Abdulwahed Omar
President, NLC

