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ITUC-Africa Condemns Nigerian Government's Unrelenting Harassment and Persecution of NLC Leadership – Cease and desist from further harassment of Workers' leaders.

The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa: <https://www.ituc-africa.org/>) unequivocally condemns the Nigerian Government's alarming and unrelenting harassment of NLC leadership. As we write, the Nigerian Government has unlawfully detained the NLC President, Comrade Joe Ajaero.

Comrade Joe Ajaero, a respected advocate for workers' rights, was en route to the United Kingdom to attend the Trade Union Congress (TUC) Congress when he was forcibly detained by Nigerian security agents and prevented from travelling. His seizure, devoid of any legal basis, is a direct affront to the core principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. It is alarming that efforts to ascertain his whereabouts and state of health have been met with silence from the authorities.

Comrade Joel Ajaero has not been charged with any crime. We don't have information about any competent court issuing a warrant of arrest for him, nor has he been restricted from travelling outside the country via any judicial pronouncement. Therefore, comrade Joel Ajaero is not a flight risk, and so we wonder why he is being hounded and treated in an uncivil manner by the Nigerian state and its security agencies, agents, and officials.

ITUC-AFRICA views these actions as representing the escalation of a pattern of state-led persecution, repression and intimidation against trade union leaders in Nigeria. The unjustified restriction, detention and incommunicado, carried out without any legal warrants, are nothing short of brazen acts of lawlessness and intimidation designed to silence dissenting voices at a time when Nigerian workers, people, households and communities are suffering under the crushing weight of the Government's failed economic policies.

Such actions constitute grave violations of internationally recognised human and trade union rights, including freedom of association and the right to peaceful assembly. The Nigerian Government's blatant disregard for these rights threatens the very fabric of democracy and undermines the principles of social justice. Nigeria must not fall into authoritarianism. The Nigerian trade union fraternity made profound and costly

sacrifices for the nation's democracy so everyone could enjoy their rights. They must not be victimised for their roles and activities to consolidate the nation's democracy.

Therefore, ITUC-Africa calls on the Nigerian Government to immediately release Comrade Joe Ajaero unconditionally and with full apology and compensation. The Nigerian Government must guarantee the physical integrity of comrade Joe Ajaero and cease and desist from further harassment of comrade Joe Ajaero and the other trade union leaders. We reject this attempt to criminalise trade union activities and force censorship upon the leaders of Nigeria's organised labour.

We urge the international community, including global trade unions and human rights organisations, development institutions, and governments, to stand in solidarity with Nigerian workers and hold the Nigerian Government accountable for these reprehensible actions. The Nigerian Government cannot suppress the struggle for workers' rights in Nigeria through intimidation, and we will not relent in our collective efforts to defend these fundamental rights.

ITUC-Africa and NLC will continue to monitor the situation closely and regularly update our affiliates and the broader international community.

Signed by comrade Akhator Joel Afolabi Odigie, General Secretary, ITUC-Africa, and issued from London, the United Kingdom.