



28th February 2024

Hunger and Poverty Nationwide Protests by Nigeria's Organised Labour: ITUC-Africa hails action and calls on the Nigerian Government to engage protesters in constructive dialogue.

The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa: <https://www.ituc-africa.org/>) stands in solidarity with the Nigerian workers and people rallying nationwide under the banner of the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) to draw attention to the worsening socio-economic situations in the country. The challenges faced by Nigerian workers and citizens in the face of rising living costs (especially food, fuel and basic needs), insecurity, and a weakening national currency (the Naira) underscore the necessity of highlighting the plight of Nigerians and the call for the Government to address these socio-economic concerns.

We salute and welcome Nigeria's organised labour's utilisation of peaceful and open means to communicate to the Government the biting hardship, misery and sufferings that the Nigerian workers and people face. ITUC-Africa is aware that the worsening socio-economic situation remained dire in the last decade but has become more catastrophic in the past months. At the moment, the monthly take-home-pay of an average Nigerian worker compared to the current national minimum wage in the face of volatile and spiking goods and services market prices, the cost of living cannot sustain a week's living for a family of three people.

Lots of Nigerians are hungry and feeling hopeless. Sadly, this situation is an avoidable and diffusible recipe for chaos and lawlessness. We imagine that the NLC-called national protests should be seen as helping to constructively manage people's frustrations from boiling over and should not be criminalised.

Nevertheless, we want to reiterate that under a democracy, freedom of association, expression, assembly, and protests are central to the consolidation of democracy, which hinges on advancing people's participation, mobilisation for change, and accountability. It is imperative that the Nigerian Government upholds these rights and refrain from overt or covert actions to undermine these rights.

Additionally, the Government must provide adequate security to protect protesters from any elements seeking to disrupt the legal and peaceful protests across the country. Threats and warnings should not impede the exercise of legitimate labour rights; instead, we encourage

open dialogue to address the root causes of the current challenges that the nation faces. Prepping and utilising amorphous group-for-hire entities such as the Nigeria Civil Society Forum to undermine and disrupt legitimate protests not only fuels violence, it is also counter-productive and archaic.

We urge the Nigerian Government to embrace genuine and sustained dialogue with organised labour and other critical stakeholders in the Nigerian socio-economic landscape. We know the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) is ready to propose pragmatic alternatives to resolve the nagging socio-economic issues. They should be listened to.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Akhator Joel Odigie', written in a cursive style.

Akhator Joel ODIGIE
General Secretary