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Nigeria is sinking, Ribadu warns - Asks Nigerians to rise against corrupt leadership

From Kunle Oderemi and Idowu Samuel - 14.10.2009

THE former chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Mallam Nuhu Ribadu, has asked Nigerians to rise up immediately to save the country from further sinking into the abyss of disrepair.

Ribadu, who was among Nigerian professionals in the United States, who lamented the deplorable conditions at home, said it was time to arrest the ship of state from drifting further. It was at a two-day posthumous event organised in Maryland, USA, by the National Conscience Party (NCP) governorship candidate in Ogun State in 2007, Mr. Lanre Banjo, in honour of the foremost human rights campaigner, the late Chief Gani Fawehinmi.

Ribadu was quoted as urging all Nigerians to unleash the 'Gani' in them in order to fight anti-democratic and corrupt leadership in the country. He catalogued what he called the socio-economic and political vices of the country and asked Nigerians to take their destiny into their own hands.

"Given the extraordinary talent available in Nigeria and the potent of democratic forces, something must be done urgently. We have to say enough is enough!

"Enough is enough of insecurity, corruption, robberies, religious intolerance and bigotry, 419, failed policies and government institutions," he said. Ribadu recalled the principle Gani stood for and propagated even at the risk of his life and advised Nigerians to take their cue from him.

He said there was no better time to do so than now, because, in his view, time was running out. "Gani fought for the supremacy of the rule of law, and should therefore be called the father of modern day Nigeria. We must set a timeline to make Nigeria great again and realise the vision of Gani. We have wasted so much time already and we can't afford to waste any more time," Ribadu stated.

He said he was celebrating "Gani because he lived a fulfilled life," adding "we are all sick and tired, but it is time to be sick and tired of being sick and tired."

Another speaker and former United States Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Walter Carrington, decried what he called the rate at which Nigeria was decaying.

Carrington spoke about how he felt proud when he first visited the University of Ibadan in the late 50s, only to find a country with a poor maintenance culture when he came back to Nigeria 20 years later.

He urged Nigerians to see the death of Gani as a challenge and work for the greatness of the country. The former US ambassador, who also presided at an interdenominational requiem for Gani, said Nigeria had lost the noblest protector of its laws, its indefatigable conscience.

"Arese and I have lost a friend whom we deeply admired and who made me proud and humble to have been a member of the legal profession which he so glorified," Carrington stated.

While observing that Gani stayed in Nigeria through the military era despite harassment from security operatives, Emeruwa said Gani's legacy was "in his courage, consistency and persistence."

Another speaker, Alhaji Ariwoola, who also flew in from Washington State, urged Nigerians not to cry for Gani. "Let's take the death of our brother, comrade, father, and hero as a wake-up call to action. It is only when we do this, his sufferings will not be in vain," he said.

Professor Segun Gbadegesin, who sent his own contribution entitled, "For justice and development: Toward a coalition of the willing," described Fawehinmi as the champion of the dispossessed.

"The reaction, in high and low places, to the transition of Chief Gani Fawehinmi is a powerful testimony that Nigerians know their heroes and even when such heroes are denied the opportunity of political office where they can demonstrate their compassionate leadership skill, they are assured of the respect and adoration of a grateful people.

"Even if the calabash designer is no more, his original designs will always be around to speak to his skills," Gbadegesin said. Earlier, Banjo had stated that former Nigerian military dictators and their agents victimised Fawehinmi because of his belief and activism.

"The lives of former military leaders - General Yakubu Gowon, Olusegun Obasanjo and Ibrahim

Babangida, all of whom imprisoned Chief Gani Fawehinmi, were apparently spared for regret. Their lives are spared to witness how someone who fought for the people and suffered for the people will be celebrated," Banjo stated. He quoted Chief Awolowo's allocutus in 1963: "Indeed in this dock, and in the entire Federation of Nigeria, the spirit of a new Nigeria is already active and at work. This spirit, working through constitutional means which I have spent the whole of my lifetime to advocate, is sure to prevail, before very long, to the delight, freedom and prosperity of all.

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