



Coalition Against Corrupt Leaders (CACOL)

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COMMUNIQUÉ ISSUED AT THE END OF PROTECT MARCH STAGED TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BY THE COALITION AGAINST CORRUPT LEADERS (CACOL) ON THURSDAY, 6 NOVEMBER, 2008.

CACOL organized a public march to protest the harassment and intimidation of Barrister Festus Keyamo for playing his role as a Whistle Blower by the House Committee on Ethics and Privileges who had earlier invited Keyamo to substantiate the allegations contained in his enquiry to the House on alleged inflation of costs of some vehicles purchased for the House members with the approval of the House Speaker, Mr. Dimeji Bankole.

1. The march was to demonstrate CACOL's support for the whistle blowing activities of Barrister Keyamo because we believe he has the right to be heard as he speaks for millions of voiceless Nigerians.
2. The activity was also used to complain about the unparliamentary and dishonourable conducts of the Committee members who, because they were uncomfortable with his audacity, rained abuses, curses and threats on Barrister Keyamo who only is exercising his rights and privileges under the law. We believe that whistle blowers deserve respect and protection but not to be treated with disrespect and indignity.
3. The march was equally used by CACOL to ask the National Assembly and the EFCC to look beyond the technicalities of the source of the information presented, the personality or socio-economic status of the presenter but the merit of the message. In this case, CACOL processed to ask the anti-graft agencies and relevant House Committees to take a dispassionate but painstaking look at the relevance of the documents presented by Barrister Keyamo with a view to determining if costs of contracts awarded was truly inflated, those involved and culpable as Keyamo suspected, as well as bringing all the indicted, no matter how big, powerful or influential to justice.

The march held as planned on Thursday 6th of November 2008. It took off from its convergent point at Area 11 junction, Abuja by about 9.30 am. Led by a sound truck upon which were hung various banners with inscriptions, "Keyamo deserves to be heard; He speaks millions of voiceless Nigerians' and "Legislators should not turn themselves to Legislooters: Protect Whistle Blowers Now!!" etc. Protest music played, speeches were made by different speakers and amplified to the environment by powerful loud speakers.

1. The march made a brief stop in front of the Louis Edet House, the headquarters of the Nigeria Police. Some speeches were made and more people joined.
2. The truck with protesters moved round the Federal Secretariat and the Eagle Square before it headed for the Three Arms Zone. All along the movement CACOL leaflets were distributed by participants to motorists, passers by and onlookers.
3. At the Three Arms Zone junction a pile of printed colour handbills denouncing Keyamo's campaign was discovered but with no one distributing nor is there any forwarding address on it.

4. At the gate of the National Assembly the policemen prevented the procession from gaining entry despite all protestations to the contrary. After some verbal exchanges the security agents eventually allowed CACOL Chairman, Debo Adeniran; a member, Miss Tayo Akingbade and an Abuja based journalist with *Peoples' Daily* to be led by a police officer to present the Coalition's message to the Clerk and Speaker of the House.
5. The trio was led, first, to the speaker's private office on the fourth floor where they were directed to the main office on the ground floor.
6. At the main office, the security man at the entrance asked for the copy of the document meant for the speaker. He was given a copy of the leaflets which he took his time to read before refusing the delegation entry to the Speaker's office.
7. CACOL's documents were eventually collected by the police escort for onward transmission to the House officers.
8. However shortly before the end of the exchanges, a couple of legislators had gathered. They accosted the delegation and demanded what right they had "to come into the premises of the National Assembly to present such documents". Most of them, although scrambled for a copy of the document, were talking together in their now usual unparliamentary manner making remarks like. "Who are you, who allowed you in?", "Who sent you, is it Gbenga Daniel?", "Keyamo was paid to hire thugs for this kind of thing," "Arrest them!" "Confiscate their documents" etc. Although the CACOL delegation dared them to affect the arrest as ordered by the mean minds, the security agents seemed more reasonable to have defied the thoughtless order.

At the end of all the shouting matches, the accompanying policeman sneaked the delegation out of their midst through the rear route.

The procession then left the National Assembly for the EFCC offices at Wuse II to submit CACOL's appeal calling for thorough investigation of the allegation of inflation of the costs of the Peugeot 407 Comfort cars purchased for the House members. Also, CACOL asked the EFCC to investigate the allegation that the House was about to spend five billion naira on purchase of television sets, personal computers, bullet proof cars as well as distribute a princely sum of 5 million naira to each member for Christmas.

The procession was properly received at the EFCC headquarters by the Director of Operations of the Commission, Mr. Tunde Ogunsakin who collected and acknowledged CACOL's letter in company of Mr Femi Babafemi, the Head of the Commission's Media and Publicity unit.

At the end of the march, CACOL decided on the following:

1. That the premises of the National Assembly is a public place that no one should be barred from gaining access to the way CACOL's procession has been twice denied entry this year.
2. That the conduct of security agents, who claimed that they were acting on the instruction of the leadership of the Assembly is reprehensible and thus constitute a gross violation of fundamental, political and socio-economic rights of Nigerians especially their rights to know, hold and disseminate opinion, rights to freedom of association, movement, peaceful assembly, speech etc.

3. That the leadership of both houses of the National Assembly to issue such instructions, that aimed at barring their constituents who voted them into position and who they claim to be representing from visiting and demonstrating their grievances to them, to security agents should be challenged in court within the shortest period of time.
4. That CACOL will continue to support Barrister Festus Keyamo in his crusade to bring known corrupt leaders to justice and campaign against his harassment or intimidation for exercising his rights as a free citizen of Nigeria.
 - 5. That CACOL should wait for three weeks before it commences further mass actions on the scam, for official satisfactory explanation on Keyamo's questions that states:
 - 'Is the "Comfort Automatic" supplied different from the one on the price list of 2008? If so, where is the place of the "Comfort" supplied on its price list? If it is not there, did the House make an order for a customized brand of the "comfort" that PAN eventually supplied?'
 - 'If PAN supplied two different brands, what is the name of the one and what is the name of other? Did PAN submit quotations for two brands?'
6. That CACOL has confidence in the ability of the EFCC to come up with enough evidence against those who could have been involved in the contract inflation exercise, adequately charge and prosecute them without delay with a view to making them face the full wrath of the law.
7. That CACOL remains committed towards engaging in activities that will help Nigerians to name, Nail, Shame and shun corrupt leaders everywhere, anywhere.

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