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*Leo Egwe's response to the attack on his family*

*"I will continue to speak out for justice and human rights"*

The recent attack on my family which led to my father's loss of one eye was an unfortunate development. It was yet another attempt to intimidate us and undermine our campaign for justice.

To any intelligent observer of the trends in Nigeria, this incident would not have come as a surprise. Because Nigeria has practically been taken over by thugs, hoodlums, kidnappers and bandits.

Nigeria is held hostage by forces of dark age and barbarism. Anything that appears to be civil or enlightened about Nigeria is mainly on the surface. Since independence Nigeria has been descending gradually into anomie, anarchy and criminality. Nigeria has derailed and deteriorated due to misrule, bad governance, collective irresponsibility and insensitivity, lack of vision and thoughtfulness, selfishness, greed, ignorance, hypocrisy and self deceit. Nigeria has failed to put in place institutions that treat the people in a fair, just and dignified manner. Nigeria has failed to adopt effective mechanisms to reward those who want to live honest, decent, diligent and dignified lives. Nigeria has failed to cultivate and institutionalize those values that make a nation great, relevant and prosperous.

At best, Nigeria pays lip service to these values. The government is irresponsible and irresponsible. The educational system is in shambles. The justice system is nothing to write home about. The value system has collapsed. The greatest tragedy is that most Nigerians have resigned to this 'fate'. They think that nothing can be done to change or improve the situation; that no radical or reasonable change can be realized. Most Nigerians have given up hope- hope of realizing a decent and dignified life; hope for justice and fairness for all; hope for recognition and respect for their rights. Fear, despair, gloom, pessimism and cynicism loom throughout the country.

The public institutions are used to oppress and exploit the public. The power of the people is used to abuse, enslave and maltreat the people.

For instance the police system is established to fight and prevent crimes. But in Nigeria, the police foster and perpetrate crimes with impunity. Police stations across Nigeria are extortion and torture chambers. The justice system is there to protect only the interest of the rich and powerful. Justice is for sale and goes to the highest bidder. The government lacks the political will to reform the system and move against those who have vested interest in the status quo. So no one should be surprised that it is taking so long to bring criminals to justice. No one should be surprised that those campaigning for justice and human rights suffer vicious attacks, harassment and intimidation.

Should we then abandon the cause of justice because of the risks involved? Should we then stop speaking out for human rights and the rule of civilized law because of the dangers we face or could face? My answer to these questions is unequivocally NO!

Indeed we run more risks and face more dangers when turn a blind eye to the oppression and unjust treatment of fellow human beings. We tacitly endorse injustice when we fail to speak out against it. According to the Nigerian Humanist Wole Soyinka , the man dies in him who keeps

silent in the face of tyranny. What we are facing in Nigeria today is worse than tyranny. So I urge all people of conscience to speak out against this tragic situation.

And on my own part, I will, in spite of the attacks, persecution, prosecution and harassment which I and my family members have suffered in the past years, continue to speak out against injustices and human rights abuses. I will continue to use all civilized means to challenge and tackle unjust and oppressive institutions. I will continue to work and campaign for social change and progress, for human rights and dignified life, for civilization, emancipation and enlightenment.