

Appendix 62:

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Don't Let Them Do this to Us: A Message to Nigerian Youths

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I know how hungry and deprived you would all feel now; the hundreds of thousands of jobless youths walking the streets of this country. A whole lot of you have managed to be educated. A whole lot others have found it impossible to get educated. For those of you who are university, polytechnic and colleges of education graduates, you have come to find out how false your earlier belief that education guarantees the meal ticket is. You are all angry and hungry. Quite a large number are walking wraiths and your situation has become compounded by societal demands. Who would blame you when you turn to weapons of destruction-and most times self destruction? My beloved fellow Nigerian youths, here is my pre-April general elections message to you.

Already, the politicians are perfecting plans on how ballot boxes would be stolen and in-house elections conducted. Political opponents would be violently eliminated and those in power are perfecting plans on how quasi-legal means would be used to disqualify potential strong opponents. And the potentially strong foes that are endangered by quasi-legal elimination are getting ready to cause general disturbances and chaos in the country if they are disqualified. For all these schemes, the instruments of perpetration are you-the Nigerian youths-and it seems that in your anger and hunger, you would have no choice other than to seize this opportunity, get the money that will come from it. And who says you are not aware? You have always been aware that in the process, you may die and the country destroyed. But at your present state, you do not care. But you should care.

This is not yet our game. The time is not yet ripe for us to throw ourselves into the battle of wrenching power. Whoever will come to power in May, would still be a product of the old brigade whose sole duty in leadership is to destroy the country further. So we should not aid them. We should refuse the guns; we should turn our backs to their pleas that we take money and destroy ourselves and our country. If the hunger in our bellies will not allow us reject the money, please let us take the money but we should always have the presence of mind not to do what we have been asked to do by the power crazy and blood thirsty fools. It is not theft or fraud, we would have only

collected a token of what is rightfully ours. Sometime soon, it shall be our turn to make right of wrongs they have done to this country.

The embattled Vice-President Atiku Abubakar in his addressed titled "Challenges For Nigeria After the Election" presented at Chatham house, London, on the 20th February, 2007 has reminded us of "Ivory Coast [sic] where the disqualification of Alhassan Ouattara from contesting the presidency brought the former icon of economic and cultural development in Africa to the present state of near anarchy". That was Atiku's belated attempt at appealing to the emotions of us all, to make us stand in solidarity with him and his cause in the event that he was disqualified from contesting for the presidency in April. My question is, where was Atiku during all these wasted years of our "nascent" democracy? Has he all of a sudden decided to champion the cause of this country because of his own problems? Let us not be deceived, they are all the same! If he is disqualified, let him fight his battle all alone. Let him leave us alone. His struggle to rule does not emanate from an unselfish desire to make this country a better place. They are all motivated by the same level of greed and insatiable desire for personal aggrandizement. Let us also remember that in the event of any disorder or chaos during or after the elections, we would be the direct sufferers. Our exalted politicians and their family members will fuel the conflict from a very safe distance, while we butcher ourselves to the last man.

And when you go to assassinate a political opponent, or to hijack a ballot box and you make any mistake, you will be the one to be destroyed, and not the politician that sent you. Have you ever stopped to ask yourself why the politicians do not send their sons and daughter? Or is it that they do not have any? Oh! Their children are abroad! I pray we should use our senses and ensure they do not do this to us again.