

## **Before It Is Too Late**

*By Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR*

His Excellency,  
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I am constrained to make this an open letter to you for a number of reasons. One, the current situation and consequent possible outcome dictate that I should, before the door closes on reason and promotion of national interest, alert you to the danger that may be lurking in the corner. Two, none of the four or more letters that I have written to you in the past two years or so has elicited an acknowledgment or any response. Three, people close to you, if not yourself, have been asking, what does Obasanjo want? Four, I could sense a semblance between the situation that we are gradually getting into and the situation we fell into as a nation during the Abacha era. Five, everything must be done to guard, protect and defend our fledgling democracy, nourish it and prevent bloodshed. Six, we must move away from advertently or inadvertently dividing the country along weak seams of North-South and Christian-Moslem. Seven, nothing should be done to allow the country to degenerate into economic dormancy, stagnation or retrogression. Eight, some of our international friends and development partners are genuinely worried about signs and signals that are coming out of Nigeria. Nine, Nigeria should be in a position to take advantage of the present favourable international interest to invest in Africa - an opportunity that will not be open for too long. Ten, I am concerned about your legacy and your climb-down which you alone can best be the manager of, whenever you so decide.

Mr. President, you have on a number of occasions acknowledged the role God enabled me to play in your ascension to power. You put me third after God and your parents among those that have impacted most on your life. I have always retorted that God only put you where you are and those that could be regarded as having played a role were only instruments of God to achieve God's purpose in your life. For me, I believe that politically, it was in the best interest of Nigeria that you, a Nigerian from minority group in the South, could rise to the highest pinnacle of political leadership. If Obasanjo could get there, Yar'Adua could get there and Jonathan can get there, any Nigerian can. It is now not a matter of the turn of any section or geographical area but the best interest of Nigeria and all Nigerians. It has been proved that no group – ethnic, linguistic, religious or geographical location – has monopoly of materials for leadership of our country. And no group solely by itself can crown any of its members the Nigerian CEO. It is good for Nigeria. I have also always told you that God has graciously been kind, generous, merciful and compassionate to me and He has done more than I could have ever hoped for. I want nothing from you personally except that you should run the affairs of Nigeria not only to make Nigeria good, but to make Nigeria great for which I have always pleaded with you and I will always do so. And it is yet to be done for most Nigerians to see.

For five capacities in which you find yourself, you must hold yourself most significantly responsible for what happens or fails to happen in Nigeria and in any case, most others will hold you responsible and God who put you there will surely hold you responsible and accountable. I have had opportunity, in recent times, to interact closely with you and I have come to the conclusion painfully or happily that if you can shun yourself to a great extent of personal and political interests and dwell more on the national interest and also draw the line between advice from selfish and self-centered aides and advice from those who in the interest of the nation may not tell you what you will want to hear, it will be well. The five positions which you share with nobody except with God and which place great and grave responsibility on you are leadership of the ruling party, headship of the Federal Government or national government, Commander-in-Chief of the Military, Chief Security Officer of the nation, and the political leader of the country. Those positions go with being the President of our country and while depending on your disposition, you can delegate or devolve responsibility, but the buck must stop on your table whether you like it or not.

Let me start with the leadership of the ruling party. Many of us were puzzled over what was going on in the party. Most party members blamed the National Chairman. I understand that some in the presidency tried to create the impression that some of us were to blame. The situation became clear only when the National Chairman spoke out that he never did anything or acted in any way without the approval or concurrence of the Party Leader and that where the Party Leader disapproved, he made correction or amendment, that we realised most actions were those of the Chairman but the motivation and direction were those of the Leader. It would be unfair to continue to level full blames on the Chairman for all that goes wrong with the Party. The Chairman is playing the tune dictated by the Paymaster. But the Paymaster is acting for a definitive purpose for which deceit and deception seem to be the major ingredients. Up till two months ago, Mr. President, you told me that you have not told anybody that you would contest in 2015. I quickly pointed out to you that the signs and the measures on the ground do not tally with your statement. You said the same to one other person who shared his observation with me. And only a fool would believe that statement you made to me judging by what is going on. I must say that it is not ingenious. You may wish to pursue a more credible and more honourable path. Although you have not formally informed me one way or the other, it will be necessary to refresh your memory of what transpired in 2011. I had gone to Benue State for the marriage of one of my staff, Vitalis Ortese, in the State. Governor Suswam was my hospitable host. He told me that you had accepted a one-term presidency to allow for ease of getting support across the board in the North. I decided to cross-check with you. You did not hesitate to confirm to me that you are a strong believer in a one-term of six years for the President and that by the time you have used the unexpired time of your predecessor and the four years of your first term, you would have almost used up to six years and you would not need any more term or time.

Later, I heard from other sources including sources close to you that you made the same commitment elsewhere, hence, my inclusion of it in my address at the finale of your campaign in 2011 as follows:

“...PDP should be praised for being the only party that enshrines federal character, zoning and rotation in its Constitution and practises

it. PDP has brought stability and substantial predictability to the polity and to the system. I do not know who will be President of Nigeria after Dr. Goodluck Jonathan. That is in the hand of God. But with PDP policy and practice, I can reasonably guess from where, in term of section of the country, the successor to President Jonathan will come. And no internal democracy or competition will thereby be destroyed. The recent resort to sentiments and emotions of religion and regionalism is self-serving, unpatriotic and mischievous, to say the least. It is also preying on dangerous emotive issues that can ignite uncontrollable passion and can destabilise if not destroy our country. This is being oblivious to the sacrifices others have made in the past for unity, stability and democracy in Nigeria in giving up their lives, shedding their blood, and in going to prison. I personally have done two out of those three sacrifices and I am ready to do the third if it will serve the best interest of Nigerian dream. Let me appeal to those who have embarked on this dangerous road to reflect and desist from taking us on a perishable journey.

With common identity as Nigerians, there is more that binds us than separates us. I am a Nigerian, born a Yoruba man, and I am proud of both identities as they are for me complementary. Our duties, responsibilities and obligations to our country as citizens and, indeed, as leaders must go side by side with our rights and demands. There must be certain values and virtues that must go concomitantly with our dream. Thomas Paine said "my country is the world"; for me, my country I hold dear.

On two occasions, I have had opportunity to work for my successors to the government of Nigeria. On both occasions, I never took the easy and destabilising route of ethnic, regional or religious consideration, rather I took the enduring route of national, uniting and stabilising route. I worked for both President Shagari and President Yar'Adua to succeed me not just because they are Moslems, Northerners or Hausa-Fulani, but because they could strengthen the unity, stability and democracy in Nigeria. We incurred the displeasure of ethnic chauvinists for doing what was right for the country. That is in the nature of burden of leadership. A leader must lead, no matter whose ox is gored.

In the present circumstance, let me reiterate what I have said on a number of occasions. Electing Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, in his own right and on his own merit, as the President of Nigeria will enhance and strengthen our unity, stability and democracy. And it will lead us towards the achievement of our Nigerian dream.

There is a press report that Dr. Goodluck Jonathan has already taken a unique and unprecedented step of declaring that he would only want to be a one-term President. If so, whether we know it or not, that is a sacrifice and it is statesmanly. Rather than vilify him and pull him down, we, as a Party, should applaud and commend him and Nigerians should reward and venerate him. He has taken the first good step.

Let us encourage him to take more good steps by voting him in with landslide victory as the fourth elected President of Nigeria on the basis of our common Nigerian identity and for the purpose of actualising Nigerian dream..."

When you won the election, one of the issues you very early pursued was that of one term of six years. That convinced me that you meant what you told me before my Speech at the campaign. Mr. President, whatever may be your intention or plan, I cannot comment much on the constitutional aspect of your second term or what some people call third term. That is for both legal and judicial attention. But if constitutionally you are on a strong wicket if you so decide, it will be fatally and morally flawed. As a leader, two things you must cherish and hold dear among others are trust and honour both of which are important ingredients of character. I will want to see anyone in the Office of the Presidency of Nigeria as a man or woman who can be trusted, a person of honour in his words and character. I will respect you for upholding these attributes and for dignifying that Office. Chinua Achebe said, "One of the truest test of integrity is its blunt refusal to be compromised." It is a lesson for all leaders including you and me. However, Mr. President, let me hope that as you claimed that you have not told anybody that you are contesting and that what we see and hear is a rumbling of overzealous aides, you will remain a leader that can be believed and trusted without unduly passing the buck or engaging in game of denials.

Maybe you also need to know that many party members feel disappointed in the double game you were alleged to play in support of party gubernatorial candidates in some States where you surreptitiously supported non-PDP candidates against PDP candidates in exchange for promise or act of those non-PDP Governors supporting you for your election in the past or for the one that you are yet to formally declare. It happened in Lagos in 2011 when Bola Tinubu was nocturnally brought to Abuja to strike a deal for support for your personal election at great price materially and in the fortune of PDP gubernatorial candidate. As Chairman of BOT, I spoke to you at that time. It happened in Ondo State where there was in addition evidence of cover-up and non-prosecution of fraud of fake security report against the non-PDP candidate and his collaborators for the purpose of extracting personal electoral advantage for you. In fact, I have raised with you the story of those in other States in the South-West where some disgruntled PDP members were going around to recruit people into the Labour Party for you, because, for electoral purpose at the national level, Labour Party will have no candidate but you. It also happened in Edo State and those who know the detail never stopped talking about it. And you know it. Ditto in Anambra State with the fiasco coming from undue interference. If you as leader of the Party cannot be seen to be loyal to the PDP in support of the candidates of the Party and the interests of such Party candidates have to be sacrificed on the altar of your personal and political interest, then good luck to the Party and I will also say as I have had occasions to

say in the past, good luck to Goodluck. If on the altar of the Party you go for broke, the Party may be broken beyond repairs. And when in a dispute between two sides, they both stubbornly decide to fight to the last drop of blood, no one knows whose blood would be the last to drop. In such a situation, Nigeria as a nation may also be adversely affected, not just the PDP. I wish to see no more bloodshed occasioned by politics in Nigeria. Please, Mr. President, be mindful of that. You were exemplary in words when during the campaign and the 2011 elections, you said, "My election is not worth spilling the blood of any Nigerian." From you, it should not be if it has to be, let it be. It should be from you, let peace, security, harmony, good governance, development and progress be for Nigeria. That is also your responsibility and mandate. You can do it and I plead that you do it. We all have to be mindful of not securing pyrrhic victory on the ashes of great values, attributes and issues that matter as it would amount to hollow victory without honour and integrity.

Whatever may be the feud in PDP and no matter what you or your aides may feel, you, as the Party Leader, have the responsibility to find solution, resolve and fix it. Your legacy is involved. If PDP as a ruling Party collapses, it will be the first time in an independent Nigeria that a ruling political party would collapse not as a result of a military coup. It is food for thought. At the prompting of Governors on both sides of the divide, and on encouragement from you, I spent two nights to intervene in the dispute of the PDP Governors. I kept you fully briefed at every stage. I deliberately chose Banquet Hall at the Villa to ensure transparency. Your aides studied all the recordings of the two nights. But I told you at the end of the exercise that I observed five reactions among the Governors that required your immediate attention as you are the only one from the vantage point of your five positions that could deal effectively with the five reactions which were bitterness, anger, mistrust, fear and deep suspicion. I could only hope that you made efforts to deal with these unpleasant reactions. The feud leading to the factionalisation of the Party made me to invite some select elders of the Party to mediate again. Since I was engaged in assignment outside the country, I was not able to join the three members of the elders group that presented the report of our mediation to you. I was briefed that you agreed to work on the report. It would appear that for now, the ball is in your court as the Leader of the Party. I can only wish you every success in your handling of the issue. But time is not your friend or that of the Party in this respect. With leadership come not just power and authority to do and to undo, but also responsibility and accountability to do and to undo rightly, well and justly. Time and opportunity are treasure that must be appreciated and shared to enhance their value and utilitarianism.

It is instructive that after half a dozen African Presidents have spoken to me to help you with unifying the Party based on your request to them and I came in company of Senator Amadu Ali to discuss the whole issue with you again, strangely, you denied ever requesting or authorising any President to talk to me. I was not surprised because I am used to such a situation of denial coming from you. Of course, I was not deterred. I have done and I will continue to do and say what is first, in the best interest of Nigeria and second, what is in the best interest of the Party. I stand for the aims, objectives, mission and vision of the founding fathers of the Party, to use it as a wholesome instrument of unity, good governance, development, prosperity and progress of Nigeria and all Nigerians. I have contributed to this goal in the past and no one who has been raised to position on the platform of the Party should shy away from further contribution to avoid division and destruction of the Party on any altar whatsoever.

Debates and dialogues are necessary to promote the interest and work for the progress of any human institution or organisation. In such a situation, agreements and disagreements will occur but in the final analysis, leadership will pursue the course of action that benefit the majority and serve the purpose of the organisation, not the purpose of an individual or a minority. In that process, unity is sustained and everybody becomes a winner. The so-called crisis in the PDP can be turned to an opportunity of unity, mutual understanding and respect with the Party emerging with enhanced strength and victory. It will be a win-win for all members of the Party and for the country. By that, PDP would have proved that it could have internal disagreement and emerge stronger. The calamity of failure can still be avoided. Please, move away from fringes or the extremes and move to the centre and carry ALL along. Time is running out.

I will only state that as far as your responsibility as Chief Security Officer of the nation is concerned for Nigerians, a lot more needs to be done to enhance the feeling of security amongst them. Whether one talks of the issue of militancy in the Niger Delta, the underlying causes of which have not been adequately addressed, if addressed at all, kidnapping, piracy, abductions and armed robberies which rather than abate are on the increase and Boko Haram which requires carrot and stick approach to lay its ghost to rest, the general security situation cannot be described as comforting. Knowing the genesis of Boko Haram and the reasons for escalation of violence from that sector with the widespread and ramification of the menace of Boko Haram within and outside the Nigerian borders, conventional military actions based on standard phases of military operations alone will not permanently and effectively deal with the issue of Boko Haram. There are many strands or layers of causes that require different solutions, approaches or antidotes. Drug, indoctrination, fundamentalism, gun trafficking, hate culture, human trafficking, money laundering, religion, poverty, unemployment, poor education, revenge and international terrorism are among factors that have effect on Boko Haram. One single prescription cannot cure all these ailments that combine in Boko Haram. Should we pursue war against violence without understanding the root causes of the violence and applying solutions to deal with all underlying factors – root, stem and branches? Nigeria is bleeding and the haemorrhage must be stopped. I am convinced that you can initiate measures that will bring all hands on deck to deal effectively with this great menace.

Mr. President, the most important qualification for your present position is your being a Nigerian. Whatever else you may be besides being a Nigerian is only secondary for this purpose. And if majority of Nigerians who voted had not cast their votes for you, you could not have been there. For you to allow yourself to be “possessed”, so to say, to the exclusion of most of the rest of Nigerians as an ‘Ijaw man’ is a mistake that should never have been allowed to happen. Yes, you have to be born in one part of Nigeria to be a Nigerian if not naturalised, but the Nigerian President must be above ethnic factionalism. And those who prop you up as of, and for ‘Ijaw nation’ are not your friends genuinely, not friends of Nigeria nor friends of ‘Ijaw nation’, they tout about. To allow or tacitly encourage people of ‘Ijaw nation’ to throw insults on other Nigerians from other parts of the country and threaten fire and brimstone to protect your interest as an Ijaw man is myopic and your not openly quieting them is even more unfortunate. You know that I have expressed my views and feelings to you on this issue in the past but I have come to realise that many others feel the way I have earlier expressed to you. It is not the best way of making friendship among all sections of Nigeria. You don’t have shared and wholesome society without inclusive political, economic and social

sustainable development and good governance. Also declaring that one section of the country voted for you as if you got no votes from other sections can only be an unnecessary talk, to put it mildly. After all and at the end of the day, democracy is a game of numbers. Even, if you would not need people's vote across the country again, your political Party will.

Allegation of keeping over 1,000 people on political watch list rather than criminal or security watch list and training snipers and other armed personnel secretly and clandestinely acquiring weapons to match for political purposes like Abacha, and training them where Abacha trained his own killers, if it is true, cannot augur well for the initiator, the government and the people of Nigeria. Here again, there is the lesson of history to learn from for anybody who cares to learn from history. Mr. President would always remember that he was elected to maintain security for all Nigerians and protect them. And no one should prepare to kill or maim Nigerians for personal or political ambition or interest of anyone. The Yoruba adage says, "The man with whose head the coconut is broken may not live to savour the taste of the succulent fruit." Those who advise you to go hard on those who oppose you are your worst enemies. Democratic politics admits and is permissive of supporters and opponents. When the consequences come, those who have wrongly advised you will not be there to help carry the can. Egypt must teach some lesson.

Presidential assistance for a murderer to evade justice and presidential delegation to welcome him home can only be in bad taste generally but particularly to the family of his victim. Assisting criminals to evade justice cannot be part of the job of the Presidency. Or, as it is viewed in some quarters, is he being recruited to do for you what he had done for Abacha in the past? Hopefully, he should have learned his lesson. Let us continue to watch.

As Head of Government, the buck of the performance and non-performance stops on your table and let nobody tell you anything to the contrary. Most of our friends and development partners are worried and they see what we pretend to cover up. They are worried about issue of security internally and on our coastal waters, including heavy oil theft, alias bunkering and piracy. They are worried about corruption and what we are doing or not doing about it. Corruption has reached the level of impunity. It is also necessary to be mindful that corruption and injustice are fertile breeding ground for terrorism and political instability. And if you are not ready to name, shame, prosecute and stoutly fight against corruption, whatever you do will be hollow. It will be a laughing matter. They are worried about how we play our role in our region and, indeed, in the world. In a way, I share some of their concerns because there are notable areas we can do more or do better than we are doing. Some of our development partners were politically frustrated to withdraw from the Olokola LNG project, which happily was not yet the same with the Brass. I initiated them both. They were viable and would have taken us close to Qatar as LNG producing country. Please do not frustrate Brass LNG and in the interest of what is best for Nigerian economy, bring back the OK LNG into active implementation. The major international oil companies have withheld investment in projects in Nigeria. If they have not completely moved out, they are divesting. Nigeria, which is the Saudi of Africa in oil and gas terms, is being overtaken by Angola only because necessary decisions are not made timely and appropriately. Mr. President, let me again plead with you to be decisive on the oil and gas sector so that Nigeria may not lag behind. Oil with gas is being discovered all over Africa. New technology is producing oil from shale elsewhere. We should

make hay while the sun shines. I hope we can still save the OK and Brass LNG projects. Three things are imperative in the oil and gas sector – stop oil stealing, encourage investment, especially by the IOCs and improve the present poor management of the industry. On the economy generally, it suffices to say that we could do better than we are doing. The signs are there and the expectations are high. The most dangerous ticking bomb is youth unemployment, particularly in the face of unbridled corruption and obscene rulers' opulence.

Let me repeat that as far as the issue of corruption, security and oil stealing is concerned, it is only apt to say that when the guard becomes the thief, nothing is safe, secure nor protected in the house. We must all remember that corruption, inequity and injustice breed poverty, unemployment, conflict, violence and wittingly or unwittingly create terrorists because the opulence of the governor can only lead to the leanness of the governed. But God never sleeps, He is watching, waiting and bidding His time to dispense justice.

The serious and strong allegation of non-remittance of about \$7bn from the NNPC to central bank occurring from export of some 300,000 barrels per day, amounting to \$900 million a month, to be refined and with refined products of only \$400m returned and Atlantic Oil loading about 130,000 barrels sold by Shell and managed on behalf of NPDC with no sale proceeds paid into NPDC account is incredible. The allegation was buttressed by the letter of the Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria to you on non-remittance to the central bank. This allegation will not fly away by non-action, cover-up, denial or bribing possible investigators. Please deal with this allegation transparently and let the truth be known.

The dramatis personae in this allegation and who they are working for will one day be public knowledge. Those who know are watching if the National Assembly will not be accomplice in the heinous crime and naked grand corruption. May God grant you the grace for at least one effective corrective action against high corruption, which seems to stink all around you in your government.

The international community knows us as we are and maybe more than we claim to know ourselves. And a good friend will tell you the truth no matter how bitter. Denials and cover-up of what is obvious, true and factual can detract from honour, dignity and respect. Truth and transparency dignify and earn respect. And life without passion for something can only achieve little. I was taken aback when an African Development Bank Director informed me that the water project for Port Harcourt, originally initiated by the Federal Government and to be financed by the bank, is being put in the cooler by the Federal Government because of the Amaechi-Jonathan face-off. Amaechi, whether he likes it or not, will cease to be governor over Rivers State, which Port Harcourt is part by the end of May 2015, but residents of Port Harcourt will continue to need improvement of their water supply. President Jonathan should rise above such pettiness and unpresidential act, if it is coming from him. But if not, and it is the action of overzealous officials reading the situation, he should give appropriate instruction for the project to be pursued. And there are other projects anywhere suffering the same coolness as a result of similar situation, let national interest supercede personal or political feud and the machinations of satanic officials.

Mr. President, let me plead with you for a few things that will stand you in good stead for the rest of your life. Don't always consider critics on national issues as enemies. Some of them



may be as patriotic and nationalistic as you and I who have been in government. Some of them have as much passion for Nigeria as we have. I saw that among Nigerians living abroad, hence, I initiated Nigerians in Diaspora Organisation, NIDO. You must also differentiate between malevolent, mischievous and objective criticism. Analyses, criticisms and commentaries on government actions and policies are sinew of democracy.

Please, Mr. President, be very wary of assistants, aides and collaborators who look for enemies for you. I have seen them with you and some were around me when I was in your position. I knew how not to allow them create enemies for me. If you allow them, everybody except them will be your enemy. They are more dangerous than identified adversaries. May God save leaders from sycophants. They know what you want to hear and they feed you with it essentially for their own selfish interest. As far as you and Nigeria are concerned, they are wreckers. Where were they when God used others to achieve His will in your life. They possess you now for their interest. No interest should be higher or more important than the Nigerian interest to you. You have already made history and please do nothing to mar history. I supported you as I supported Yar'Adua. For me, there is neither North-South divide nor Christian-Moslem divide but one Nigeria.

Let me put it, that talks, loose and serious, abound about possible abuse and misuse of the military and the legitimate security apparatus for unwholesome personal and political interest to the detriment of the honour, dignity, oath and professionalism of these honourable and patriotic forces. Let me urge the authorities not to embark on such destructive path for an important element of our national make-up. The roles of the military and the security agencies should be held sacrosanct in the best interest of the nation. Again, let not history repeat itself here.

I believe that with what Nigeria went through in the past, the worst should have already happened. It must be your responsibility as the captain of the ship to prevent the ship from going aground or from a shipwreck. For anybody close to you saying that if the worst happens, he or she would not be involved is idle and loose talk. If we leave God to do His will and we don't rely only on our own efforts, plans and wisdom, God will always do His best. And the power of money and belief in it is satanically tempting. As I go around Nigeria and the world, I always come across Nigerians who are first-class citizens of the world and who are doing well where they are and who are passionate to do well for Nigeria. My hope for our country lies in these people. They abound and I hope that all of us will realise that they are the jewels of Nigeria wherever they may be and not those who arrogate to themselves eternal for ephemeral.

Also to my embarrassment at times, I learned more about what is going on in the public and private sectors of Nigeria from our development partners, international institutions and those transacting business in Nigeria most times I was abroad. On returning home to verify the veracity of these stories, I found some of them not only to be true but more horrifying than they were presented abroad. Other countries look up to Nigeria for regional leadership. Failure on the part of Nigeria will create a schism that will be bad for the region.

Knowing what happens around you, most of which you know of and condone or deny, this letter will provoke cacophony from hired and unhired attackers but I will maintain my serenity because by this letter, I have done my duty to you as I have always done, to your government, to the Party, PDP, and to our country, Nigeria. If I stuck out my neck and God used me and others as instrument

to work hard for you to reach where you are today in what I considered the best political interest of Nigeria, tagging me as your enemy or the enemy of your administration by you, your kin or your aides can only be regarded as ridiculous to extreme. If I see any danger to your life, I will point it out to you or ward it off as I have done in the past. But I will not support what I believe is not in the best interest of Nigeria, no matter who is putting it forward or who is behind it. Mr. President, I have passed the stage of being flattered, intimidated, threatened, frightened, induced or bought. I am never afraid to agree or disagree but it will always be on principles, and if on politics, in the national interest. After my prison experience in the close proximity of and sharing facilities with an asylum in Yola, there is nothing worse for anyone alive and well. And that was for a military dictator to perpetuate himself in power. Death is the end of all human beings and may it come when God wills it to come. The harassment of my relations and friends and innuendo that are coming from the Government security apparatus on whether they belong to new PDP or supporters of defected Governors and which are possibly authorised or are the work of overzealous aides and those reading your lips to act in your interest will be counter-productive. It is abuse of security apparatus. Such abuse took place last in the time of Abacha. Lies and untruths about me emanating from the presidency is too absurd to contemplate. Saying that I recommended a wanted criminal by UK and USA authorities to you or your aides to supplant legitimately elected PDP leader in South-West is not only unwise and crude but also disingenuous. Nobody in his or her right senses will believe such a story and surely nobody in Ogun State or South-West zone will believe such nonsense. It is a clear indication of how unscrupulous and unethical the presidency can go to pursue your personal and political interest. Nothing else matters. What a pity! Nothing at this stage of my life would prevent me from standing for whatever I consider to be in the best interest of Nigeria – all Nigeria, Africa and the world in that order. I believe strongly that a united and strong PDP at all costs is in the best interest of Nigeria. In these respects, if our interests and views coincide, together we will march. Putting a certified unashamed criminal wanted abroad to face justice and who has greatly contributed to corruption within the judiciary on a high profile of politics as you and your aides have done with the man you enthrone as PDP Zonal leader in the South-West is the height of disservice to this country politically and height of insult to the people of South-West in general and members of PDP in that zone in particular. For me, my politics goes with principles and morality and I will not be a party to highly profiling criminals in politics, not to say one would be my zonal leader. It destroys what PDP stands for from its inception. By the government not acting positively and promptly in the case of Buruji Kashamu wanted in the US for drug trafficking and money laundering crimes, it is only confirming the persistent reports of complicity or involvement of high-level political figures in drug trafficking and condonation of the crime for political benefit. Whichever way, it is a very dangerous development for Nigeria. Sooner or later, drug barons will be in control of large real estates, banks and other seemingly legitimate businesses; in elections they will buy candidates, parties and eventually buy power or be in power themselves. It may be instructive if I quote fairly extensively from Lansana Gberie's recent paper titled, 'State Officials and Their Involvement in Drug Trafficking in West Africa':

“... The controversial and puzzling case of Buruji Kashamu, a powerful figure in the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), suggests that a successful and wealthy politician's association with drug trafficking is hardly disabling. Kashamu was indicted by a grand jury in the Northern

District of Illinois in 1998 for conspiracy to import and distribute heroin to the United States. The indictment named him under his own name as well as two supposed aliases: 'Alaji' and 'Kasmal'. His whereabouts were unknown at the time, however, and his co-accused were tried and convicted. Later that year, he was found living comfortably in England, and, on receipt of an extradition request from the US, the UK authorities arrested Kashamu. After a very protracted proceeding lasting until 2003, however, an English Judge refused to extradite Kashamu on grounds of uncertainty about his true identity. Kashamu triumphantly returned to Nigeria and soon after became a key political figure. He is now believed to be very close to President Goodluck Jonathan, because of his ability to mobilise votes in key States in Western Nigeria. The US government reviewed Kashamu's case, with the famous Judge Richard Posner presiding. Posner concluded that while Kashamu's identity remains murky, there is little doubt that the figure now exercising authority in Nigeria's PDP is the same as Kashamu the 'Alaji' who was indicted for conspiracy to smuggle illicit drugs into the United States. Despite this, the Nigerian government has persistently ignored calls by civil society groups to investigate Kashamu and extradite him to the US. On 2 July 2013, the Federal Court in Lagos determined that Kashamu should be extradited to the US. Kashamu immediately appealed against this decision, yet in November 2013, a new Panel of Judges constituted by the President of the Court of Appeal unanimously held that his appeal lacked merit, and that Kashamu should be extradited. His extradition to the United States will certainly set an important precedent... unless, of course, he uses his political skills and contacts to continue avoiding it..."

God is never a supporter of evil and will surely save PDP and Nigeria from the hands of destroyers. If everything fails and the Party cannot be retrieved from the hands of criminals and commercial jobbers and discredited touts, men and women of honour, principles, morality and integrity must step aside to rethink.

Let me also appeal to and urge defected, dissatisfied, disgruntled and in any way displeased PDP Governors, legislators, party officials and party members to respond positively if the President seriously takes the initiative to find mutually agreeable solution to the current problems for which he alone has the key and the initiative. I have heard it said particularly within the presidency circle that the disaffected Governors and members of PDP are my children. I begin to wonder if, from top to bottom, any PDP member in elective office today is not directly or indirectly a beneficiary and, so to say, my political child. Anyone who may claim otherwise will be like a river that has forgotten its source. But like a good father, all I seek is peaceful and amicable solution that will re-unite the family for victory and progress of the family and the nation and nothing else.

In a democracy, leaders are elected to lighten the burden of the people, give them freedom, choice and equity and ensure good governance and not to deceive them, burden them, oppress them, render them hopeless and helpless. Nothing should be done to undermine the tenets,

and values of democratic principles and practice. Tyranny in all its manifestation may be appealing to a leader in trying times of political feud or disagreement. Democracy must, however, prevail and be held as sacrosanct. Today, you are the President of Nigeria, I acknowledge you and respect you as such.

The act of an individual has a way of rubbing off on the generality. May it never be the wish of majority of Nigerians that Goodluck Jonathan, by his acts of omission or commission, would be the first and the last Nigerian President ever to come from Ijaw tribe. The idea and the possibility must give all of us food for thought. That was never what I worked for and that would never be what I will work for. But legacy is made of such or the opposite.

My last piece of advice, Mr. President, is that you should learn the lesson of history and please do not take Nigeria and Nigerians for granted. Move away from culture of denials, cover-ups and proxies and deal honestly, sincerely and transparently with Nigerians to regain their trust and confidence. Nigerians are no fools, they can see, they can hear, they can talk among themselves, they can think, they can compare and they can act in the interest of their country and in their own self-interest. They keenly watch all actions and deeds that are associated with you if they cannot believe your words. I know you have the power to save PDP and the country. I beg you to have the courage and the will with patriotism to use the power for the good of the country. Please uphold some form of national core values. I will appeal to all Nigerians particularly all members of PDP to respect and dignify the Office of the President. We must all know that individuals will come and go but the Office will remain.

Once again, time is of the essence. Investors are already retreating from Nigeria, adopting 'wait and see attitude' and knowing what we are deficient of, it will take time to reverse the trend and we may miss some golden opportunities.

Finally, your later-day conversion into National Conference is fraught with danger of disunity, confusion and chaos if not well handled. I believe in debate and dialogue but it must be purposeful, directed and managed well without ulterior motives. The ovation has not died out yet and there is always life after a decent descent.

Accept, Dear Mr. President, the assurances of my highest consideration.

**PS:** I crave your indulgence to share the contents of this letter, in the first instance, with General Ibrahim Babangida and General Abdulsalami Abubakar, who, on a number of occasions in recent times, have shared with me their agonising thoughts, concerns and expressions on most of the issues I have raised in this letter concerning the situation and future of our country. I also crave your indulgence to share the contents with General Yakubu Danjuma and Dr. Alex Ekwueme, whose concerns for and commitments to the good of Nigeria have been known to be strong. The limit of sharing of the contents may be extended as time goes on.

\*This letter, dated December 2, 2013, was leaked to the media on December 11, 2013