

WORKERS AND YOUTH SOLIDARITY NETWORK (WYSN)

2023 MAY DAY; WORKERS MUST BUILD RESISTANCE NOW!

For 48-hour General Strike and Mass Protests Now!

The Workers and Youth Solidarity Network (WYSN) send our warmest May Day greetings of solidarity to the working people of Nigeria. WYSN believes there is a deep crisis in education, security, transportation, housing and health sectors in Nigeria. Workers need to build resistance against the dwindling basic amenities and high rate of inflation in the country. We emphasise that unless a mass movement is built and there are struggles to demand safe and secure communities, public-funded housing and education, free health care system at point of needs, free, safe and convenient transport systems, and massive creation of safe and secure jobs for the unemployed youths, the fundamental problems of insecurity, underdevelopment and poverty cannot be eradicated.

A close look around the world will show indisputably that the working people are those who suffer in the face of wars, anti-poor policies, and mounting wealth of the ruling elites. The current Russian-Ukraine war, Kenya street protests and global women struggles are testimonies to this. As we also saw in Nigeria during the past few months, the naira redesign policy crushed small business owners and mass of the working people as they couldn't access naira notes needed for transport and to purchase menial items. Nigeria is more severely hit because of the neo-liberal and the capitalist policies that Nigerian rulers subscribe to.

WYSN believes that the building of people-centred and democratically-controlled public services is sacrosanct in ensuring better living conditions for the working people. To achieve this, the workers and labour movement must immediately commence activities with priority to the struggle to end incessant ASUU strikes, casualization, hunger, poverty and the partition of the country and to eliminate the scourge of division among the workers along ethnic and religious lines.

THE CRISIS IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

Needless to say, the government policies have forced the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) to incessant strike actions. These policies have crippled the Nigerian education sectors and a lot of Nigerian youths have lost a substantial amount of their work-age trying to acquire academic certificates. The quality of education in these tertiary institutions has dwindled. From the dilapidated infrastructures to corrupt administrations, politically-motivated appointments, extreme hostel accommodation policies, lack/inadequate staff, incessant increase in tuition fee, and others. These practices have sent millions of youths into the street and turned them into internet fraudsters, bandits, kidnappers, commercial sex workers, touts and fly-by-

internet hawkers all for the sake of survival. We believe that a struggle for a sane Nigeria must commence with the struggle for a free, functional, public-funded and democratically-managed education sector. This kind of struggle will comprise of the organized labour, academic unions, students' unions, artisans, parents and the general public.

FIGHT AGAINST CASUALISATION

One of the major challenges in the work place today is casualization. It's important to stress that bill to criminalise casualization of workers has passed the second reading; it was referred to the House Committee on Labour and Productivity for further legislative action.

The new president of Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) Comrade Joe Ajaero has promised to fight against casualization. But this promise needs to be coupled with a plan of actions such as picketing of big corporations and noticeable companies that are known for casualization. This is important because in many struggles of workers across the country, it is the leadership of the unions in the sector that have headed struggles. For Instance, big supermarkets in Abuja like HMEDIX, SAHAD STORES, SHOPRITES and Passion Trust are not allowed to get organised. Words alone are not enough- we need militant actions!

Casualisation has even begun to bite workers in well-paid sectors like banks, the oil and gas industries, aviation etc. There are also many factories with high numbers of casuals- in some cases over 80 percent of the workforce are casual workers. Yet, trade union leaders in those factories do not organise casuals and in that way they are overseeing their extinction- they don't care as long as they are paid for that by the management. It is also instructive to note that the scourge of casualisation has also started creeping into the public sector, a sector that was hitherto known for job security. We must prepare to struggle against this menace, we must name a day of actions to picket many of these industries.

A NEW MINIMUM WAGE

Obviously, the current minimum wage of N30,000 is nothing but a poverty-stricken wage for most of the working people. With the current exchange rate of \$1 to N460, it means that Nigeria pays \$65 as a minimum wage. Taking account the astronomical inflation rate, pocket-

tearing fuel prices, increase in prices of food in the market, and so on, it is clear why most Nigerians resort to illegal ways to generate extra funds to sustain themselves. Globally, we face a growing attack on wages, and Nigeria is not an exception. Of course, we acknowledge the recent 20% salary increase announced by Lagos State Governor, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu, in the aftermath of his re-election. However, this increase doesn't correspond to the realities we have in the state. The majority of Lagos State Civil Servants cannot afford accommodation facilities close to their place of work and spend even more than half of their salary on transportation. Those who managed to secure accommodation close to their work place are paying rents through their nose. We believe that a N100,000 minimum wage, backed up with free transport system, free education, public housing system and free health care should be the target of the workers movement. The Federal Government also promised to commence payment of 40% per rise by April Ending but this isn't enough. Workers at the state and federal level must be ready to engage in action to demand a N100,000 minimum wage, together with the basic amenities we have identified above.

Nigeria could afford to implement all of these policies if a socialist system was installed. But the present crop of parasite politicians will not allow this. There can only be improvements if the workers vehemently make demands with mass protests and general strikes. The jumbo pay to political officer holders has exposed the gross inequality within Nigeria society. It has exposed the extent at which politicians enjoy our collective wealth, while workers live on low pay and precarious employment, which have had the hardest impact on women and young people. It has exposed the massive exploitation by a parasitic ruling class and the global capitalist elite that increasingly control and determine the applied policies, thereby making vast profits from people's needs.

The fact that Nigeria loses health workers to European countries is a clear indicator of the rottenness in the Nigerian health sector. The lack of sufficient salaries, insurance, infrastructure, the heavy workload, low staff enrolment, precarious state of health facilities, ect, have left the country's health sector in a mess. Health workers and society in general must be ready to commence decisive struggle that will ensure a complete revamp of the Nigerian health sector.

END CAPITALISIM NOW!

Capitalism is a deeply flawed exploitative system that has nothing to offer but growing misery. The capitalist mode of production serves the interests of the ruling class while offering the working class nothing but poverty, racism and sexism. War and violence are inherent features of the system, a system that is destroying our planet in its constant pursuit of ever-increasing corporate profits. It is also increasingly

destroying people's minds and spreading alienation throughout the world. It is time that working people and youth fight back.

We express our solidarity with all those around the world struggling against imperialism, to the hundreds of millions of workers suffering savage exploitation by both the local capitalist class and transnational corporations. We offer solidarity to all those nations and peoples struggling to build a new society, on the road to socialism.

BUILD A FIGHTING ORGANISED LABOUR MOVEMENT

Workers need to build more militant trade union and community organisations to defend and advance their interests, to protect their living standards and their rights. We support workers seeking to rebalance power in their work-place through unionisation. The Nigerian capitalist class attempts to remove the minimum wage from exclusive legislative list. This must be resisted with continuous mass actions.

The Workers and Youth Solidarity Network remains resolute in its conviction that real qualitative changes to the lives of our people will only be met by the building a working class political alternative. The Labour Party experience as shown that this is possible, although the majority of its candidates at the last elections were not working class candidates- the party nomination forms were too exorbitant to what ordinary working class people could afford. We need to reclaim the Labour Party or build a mass working people party with a programme to expand public services, industries and institutions, decoupled from capitalist profiteering and private ownership. Expropriating big capital without compensation, active participation in public institutions and industries and a socialist transformation is the only solution to the capitalist crisis engulfing not only the Nigerian working class but the global working class. We fight for the overthrow of capitalism and a socialist society where our collective wealth will be used for the interest of the majority and not for the few profiteers.

To this extent, we join the workers on the occasion of May Day to demand:

- 100,000 new minimum wage
- Immediate end to academic workers strikes and proper funding of education
- Decent and secure jobs for all unemployed
- Improved security of life and properties
- No to jumbo pay for political office holders among many other demands.

If we fight we may win, if we don't fight we have already lost

May 2023

**The future belongs to those who struggle.
A better future is won through struggle.
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