

Nigerian workers fight back

Nigeria is one of the biggest economies in Africa with vast stocks of oil and other natural resources. Huge wealth has been accumulated, but most of it resides in the foreign bank accounts of the super-rich - a handful of corrupt businessmen and politicians. Military rule has officially ended in Nigeria and yet military/police killings of civilians are a frequent occurrence.

Elections, when they are called, are notoriously rigged with ruling party candidates scoring impossible figures like 99.92%! Opposition candidates, especially socialist ones, often have their votes disregarded or falsified, thereby being deprived of their right to represent the people.

Corrupt politicians and elections

The current finance minister, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, only took the job on condition that she was paid in US dollars, which means she gets \$247,000 a year, more than most ministers in Europe receive!

The US State Department reported that the 2003 elections were; "Not generally judged free and fair and (they) therefore abridged citizens' right to change their government."

The worst aspect of everyday life for the overwhelming majority of Nigerians is the struggle for survival. Wages, when they are paid on time, have by no means kept pace with inflation and have been left far behind the rapidly rising cost of fuel on the home market. There have been successive rises in the prices of petrol and kerosene in the last year, plus a proposal to impose a new purchase tax on fuel.

These measures have driven the mass of workers and poor people to protest and forced the union leaders to organise three general strikes since June 2000. Where food is usually transported to the cities daily and little or no refrigeration is available, it is extremely difficult for workers to sustain a general strike over a lengthy period. However, such was the strength of feeling that the strike of June and July 2003 went on for a powerful 8 days.

At times the government of President Obasanjo has been forced to make some concessions, but then it simply continues with neo-liberal austerity and privatisation policies. His government continues to force up the price of fuel.

The Campaign for Democratic and Workers' Rights

The Campaign for Democratic and Workers' Rights is concerned with helping to strengthen the workers' movement in Nigeria, particularly the active rank and file, through organising exchanges of experience of mobilisations and providing practical, moral and financial solidarity.

We aim to assist the campaigns of students against poor educational provisions and against political repression when they take protest action. The campaign will also take

up the struggle of working women for equal opportunities and incomes - in education and at work and against their treatment in law and in society as second class citizens.

The trade unions are the key to conducting victorious struggles. Their leaders, local and national, often risk beatings, arrest and even death for their activities. The best of them fight on undeterred.

Publicity

The situation in Nigeria is not well known in the workers' movement internationally. The founding sponsors of the CDWRN, listed overleaf, are concerned to widely publicise the plight of workers, women and students in the country.

We want to produce regular bulletins detailing the numerous infringements of democratic rights and trade union rights in Nigeria and outlining the work of those who fight against them. We also want to raise funds to help the activists there to do the campaigning and organising work amongst youth, women and workers. This means producing campaigning material, paying for activists to travel around the country and maintaining office facilities. You could help by paying towards a computer, a telephone or a generator. All sponsors and contributors will be sent details of what is needed and how the money is spent.

We are organising some speaking tours of representatives of the CDWRN from Nigeria and can also supply local speakers. We would be happy to comply with any requests from trade unions, student bodies, factory committees, or any interested groups for someone to come and talk about the situation in Nigeria and the work of the campaign.



We can also send additional information and campaign material on request. We would also very much appreciate organisations and/or individuals holding collections and making donations. Standing orders are also extremely valuable to provide a regular income to the campaign.



Solidarity and practical support

All of us who are already involved in the CDWRN are convinced that an international campaign can have a big effect.

We are appealing to you, as activists in countries where you do have the 'privilege' of being able to exercise all these basic democratic rights, to consider as soon as possible the following:

- Adding your name or that of your organisation to the list of sponsors of the CDWRN.
- Organising meetings to discuss the situation in Nigeria.
- Getting a member of the CDWRN from Nigeria itself or from your own country to speak at a union, party or public meeting on the case for giving support.
- Agreeing a large donation towards the work of the Campaign in Nigeria and/or taking out a bankers' order for a regular monthly payment to the campaign.

Yours in solidarity,

Segun Sango,

Member of the Steering Committee of CDWRN

If you can pay directly to an English bank account, then the details are:

Account name: 'Campaign for Democratic and Workers' Rights in Nigeria'.

Bank: Lloyds TSB. Sort code 30-95-03. Account no. 00563695.

Those who have agreed, in a personal capacity, to put their names to CDWRN include:

Austria

Michael Gehmacher, Union of Salaried Private Sector Employees, shop steward
Robert Hobek, Union of Postal and Telegraph workers,
Peter Ulrich Lehner, Managing Editor of Mitbestimmung, trade union paper
Josef Loew, OBB, Austrian Railways, Chairman of Representative body, constituency 904

Brazil

Luciana Genro, federal deputy from the state of Rio Grande do Sul

Belgium

Jo Coulier, Vice President ACOD-Onderwijs region Brussel
Simon Van Haren, member of the Social Council (VUB) of Free University of Brussels

England and Wales

Raph Parkinson, UNISON national executive (NEC), vice chair of the international committee
Gary Jones, NEC member of the Communication Workers Union (CWU)
Bernard Roome, NEC member CWU
Dave Nellist, Socialist Party councillor, Coventry
Rob Windsor, Socialist Party councillor, Coventry
Ian Page, Socialist Party councillor, Lewisham
Chris Flood, Socialist Party councillor, Lewisham

Chile

Raimundo Espinoza, President Codelco (Copper Miners' Union)

Czech Republic

Vaclav Votruba, CMOS PS - Teachers Union, branch leader

France

Pascal Grimbert, conseillers syndicaux du Snuipp de Seine Maritime
Marie Jose Douet, conseillers syndicaux du Snuipp de Seine Maritime
Sylvian Bled, membre de la commission executive departementale CGT
Olivier Ruet, membre du bureau academique CGT-Education Creteil

Germany

Marc Treude, IGBCE, Betriebsrat of Cinram Alsdorf
Lorenz Blume, ver.di, shop steward at Kassel University
Steffi Nitschke, ver.di, shop steward at Kassel Hospital
Katharina Seewald, DGB, regional chair, Nordhessen
Klaus Hauswirth, member of the ver.di unemployment council in Hamburg
Susan Powell, Betriebsratin and shop steward at Arbeiterwohlfahrt, Hamburg
Alexandra Arnsburg, Mitglied im Bezirksfachbereichsvorstand ver.di FB 9 Berlin Brandenburg

Greece

Nikos Malinoglou, Chair of local union of hospital workers in Sismanoglio Hospital, Athens
Stella Hondromatidou, member of EC of local union of hospital workers, Papageorgiou hospital
Yiannis Triggas, Chair of Bookshop and Paper workers Union
Dimitris Hadjikostas, member of Student union executive at Macedonia University, Thessaloniki
Nikos Kanellis, member of student union executive at Thessalia University
Panagiotis Anapalis, member of student union executive at Thessalia University

Ireland South

Clare Daly, Siptu catering shop steward Aer Lingus and County Councillor, Fingal Council, Dublin North
Joe Higgins, Socialist Party member of national parliament (TD)

Ireland North

Jim Barbour, Fire Brigades Union (FBU), executive
Tony Maguire, FBU, secretary Region 2
Carmel Gates, Northern Ireland Public Services Alliance (NIPSA) President
Padraig Mulholland, NIPSA, chair Public Officers Group
Paul Dale, NIPSA, vice-chair Civil Service Group
Mary Cahillane, INTO - teachers' union, executive member

Pakistan

Azad Kadri, national deputy secretary general PTLC Lions Unity Union
Faisal Wahid, national secretary General Railway Workers' Union (Workshop)
Rukshana Manzoor, Secretary Education Mutahida Labour Federation

Portugal

Francisco Raposo, Lisbon Council Workers' Union,

Scotland

Gary Clark, CWU Minority Grade branch secretary
Ronnie Stevenson, social work stewards' convenor, UNISON, Glasgow City Council
Ian Fitzpatrick, PCS
Eric Stevenson, UNISON shop steward, Glasgow City Council Housing dept
Jim McFarlane, social work stewards convenor, UNISON, Dundee City Council
Danny McAllion, UNISON shop steward, East Renfrewshire Council
Alison Hughes, UNISON shop steward, Dundee City Council
Janice Godrich, President, Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS)

South Africa

Bongo Sijora, Socialist Student Movement, University of the Witwatersrand executive
Sipho Tshabalala, chairperson Socialist Student Movement, University of Kwa Zulu Natal, Durban Westville
Thato Mohapi, shop steward SA Municipal Workers' Union, Greater Johannesburg branch
Sipho Rapolina, EC member, Pretoria region, National Health and Allied Workers Union, personal capacity
Bernie Beukes, Secretary.General, Commercial Services and Allied Workers Union (Cosawu)
Trevor Christian, President, Cosawu
Tengwa Makwenke, Concerned Residents Movement (Coremo),
Khayelitsha, Western Cape

Sri Lanka

Janaraja Joint Healthworkers' Union
Socialist Plantation Workers' Union

Sweden

Jonas Brannberg, Rattvispartiet Socialisterna (RS) councillor, Luleå
Liv Gustavsson-Rhodin, RS councillor, Luleå
Jan Hagglund, RS councillor, Umeå
Ingrid Eriksson, RS councillor, Umeå
Yvonne Lantto, RS councillor, Umeå

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campaign for
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NIGERIA

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