



TRANSITION MONITORING GROUP

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PRESS STATEMENT

THE STORMING OF THE INSIDER NEWS MAGAZINE BY THE STATE SECURITY SERVICE

The Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) condemns in strong terms the storming of the offices of the Insider newsmagazine by the State Security Service. The TMG also deplores the attempt by the service at justifying the said raid in the name of protecting Democracy and its institutions.

The storming of the offices of the newsmagazine and attempt at justification by the State Security Service is a sad and constant reminder that the democratic project in Nigeria is still at its infancy. This is because the State Security Services has arrogated to itself the task of assessment, justification, adjudication and nebulous security arrangement that goes against the grains of the new democratic order.

The travails of the Insider Newsmagazine and the attempt at proscribing the Nigerian Labour Congress are part of a wider and insidious agenda at silencing alternative voices and centers of opposition to the policies and programs of the government. It is also part of a wider program aimed at imposing without dissent an authoritarian economic and political agenda on the Nigerian nation.

Only faith and fidelity to the rule of law and due process can sustain the Nigerian democratic project. A deliberate sabotage of the process and intimidation of its workers in the name of State Security will set the agenda of national rebirth back by so many decades.

If the Insider Newsmagazine has libeled any individual or if any individual or institution is aggrieved by whatever is published, such an individual or institution can seek redress in accordance with the laws of the land. That is the democratic part of the rule of law and due process. The laws of Nigeria did not set up the State Security Service to protect the reputation or political empire of individuals. They are to protect the Security of the State.

We therefore call on the State Security Service to lift their siege on the offices of the Insider newsmagazine and stop the harassment and intimidation of its staff.

We also call on the State Security Service to pay to the staff and institution of the insider newsmagazine adequate compensation for the loss of revenue occasioned by the storming of the premises of the newsmagazine.

Our democracy can only grow and have meaning when we learn to respect its critical institutions. The press cannot discharge its function of holding government accountable when security agents storm such institutions at will. The press can act as a bulwark against dictatorship and open societies when they are given a free hand to function.

Festus Okoye Esq.

Chair

13TH SEPTEMBER 2004