

Address by the National President, Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR) at the twentieth Commemorative Lecture of the CDHR held at Excellence Hotel, Ogba, Lagos on June 25, 2009

Special quests of honour

Esteemed personalities

Ladies and gentlemen

It is with due sense of humility that I welcome you all, on behalf of the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), to this momentous event climaxing the week-long activities marking the twentieth anniversary of organization. By honoring our invitation, you have bestowed immeasurable honour on individual and collective efforts of members and stakeholders in the CDHR project in the last twenty years.

The CDHR began what could rightly be described an ambitious mission in 1989 under a military autocracy that grew even worse in the first decade of the tortuous journey in the campaign for freedom and democratic society. Twenty years on in the struggle, we owe it a duty to Nigerians to commemorate the uncommon courage and faith invested in the Nigeria project. It is important to remind ourselves that ordinary Nigerians and bandmasters in the corridors of power, are the custodians of the little inroads we have made under civil rule following the partial defeat of forces of oppression which military hegemony

We therefore wish to, once again, express deep sense of appreciation to the courage of patriotic Nigerians who sacrificed all in the course of engaging military autocracy. At this momentous event, we salute the courage of those Nigerians killed, maimed or unduly abused by security agents on our campuses and streets across Nigerians in the course of challenging repressive governments. It would therefore be appropriate to document the profile of victims of legitimate protests and resistance in those hectic days beyond what most literatures depicting the ills of Military rule. Despite the absence of this respected colleagues in our midst today, we take solace in the fact that CDHR has remain at the forefront of the struggle to liberate our country.

It is precisely for this reason that this twentieth anniversary lecture with the theme: **Twenty years in the Defence of Human Rights in Nigeria** becomes pertinent. Without pre-empting our

Guest Lecturer who in his right is well at home with the events of the last twenty years having being a lead actor at different stage of the struggle. Nothing demonstrates that the siege of militarism still abounds in our midst today than the rigid Decree 24 of 1999 alias 1999 Constitution. While we are convinced that Dr. Kayode Fayemi will do justice to the issues, we like to remind Nigerians that the struggle for genuine democracy has just begun. The duty of building enduring democracy through replacement of the Decreed 1999 Constitution and reform o the electoral process is as crucial, if not more compelling than the struggle to get the military from political stage.

It is important to restate the resolve of the CDHR to team up with relevant stakeholders in achieving its objectives. As a leadership development organization, we recognize the importance of driving the process of governance through leadership that is responsive and self-accounting. There can never be good governance without credibility in electoral process. CDHR will not condone fraudulent electoral process or shy away from denouncing any government that derives 'legitimacy' through fraudulent electioneering process. The CDHR will also not accord recognition to any corrupt leadership at the federal, states and local government levels, no matter how credible the election that enthrone them may seem. As an organization, we encourage our members to participate in government by either seeking elective office or through appointments. But we strictly demands that members of the CDHR should be good ambassadors as the organization remains unwavering in isolating government or officials with questionable pedigree or character in politics.

Once again, we express deep appreciation to individuals, organizations and corporate bodies that have identified with the CDHR in the course of this celebration. It is our hope that the partnership between the CDHR and other allies in the struggle for a democratic and secured society will be sustained in the years to come.

We thank you all for honouring our invitation and for your presence.

Olasupo Ojo Esq.
National President
Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR)