

A Joint Statement

Enlistment Of Members Of "Civilian JTF" & Unconstitutional Others Into Nigerian Military Must Be Discontinued

---SBCHROs

(Enugu Nigeria: 11th November 2018)-*If truly "Nigeria is a multi ethno-religious democratic country founded for the purpose of promoting the good government and welfare of all persons in the country on the principles of Freedom, Equality and Justice, and for the purpose of consolidating the UNITY of the Nigerian Peoples"; then the goings on in the present Nigerian Armed Forces particularly the Nigerian Army are not only in the distant contrary but also call for serious worries or concerns, SBCHROs; a coalition of 21 human rights and good governance groups said today in a joint statement issued in Enugu, Nigeria*

SBCHROs are strongly calling for immediate stop and discontinuation of recruitment into the Nigerian Military particularly the Nigerian Army of members "Civilian JTF" and other recruitments considered unconstitutional and breach of the country's religious and ethnic pluralism. Indiscriminate recruitment or enlistment of members of the "Civilian JTF" is a clear act of sectional soldiering and serious threat not only to the ethno-religious composition of Nigeria but also the principles of Freedom, Equality and Justice upon which Nigeria is said to have been founded. By such reckless or indiscriminate recruitments, the existing Constitution of Nigeria particularly its Section 14 (3) is seriously threatened and undermined; likewise the cohesion, security and unity of the country.

With what we have read and still are reading in the media, there are dangers ahead unless the ugly trend is totally reversed by the present political authorities and those of the Nigerian Military including the Nigerian Army. All the security services and their establishments, numbering 481,000 personnel; comprising 181,000 military personnel (army, air force and navy) and 291,685 police personnel and the entire security compositions of the country must be made to reflect the multi ethno-religious composition of Nigeria. The indiscriminate and blanket release of detained Boko Haram terrorists is also a dangerous threat to the security of the country; capable of pushing the country into "returned insurgencies", "repeat offenses" and "retreatism".

We say these because the recruitments in recent times in the country's military establishments particularly the Nigerian Army have remained sketchy and controversial; with such recruitment exercises carried out outside the confines of the existing Constitution and multi ethnic and religious tradition upon which Nigerian Military including the Army was founded. From random and sketchy recruitment exercises, to exclusion of the Southeast from Nigerian Security Council and secrecy trailing the recently opened "Nigerian Army University" in Bui, Katsina State, it is very difficult to convince **SBCHROs** and many Nigerians that the affairs of the present Nigerian Military particularly the Nigerian Army still truly reflect "all inclusive Nigerian Armed Forces" or multi ethno-religiously layered "Nigerian Army".

By recent media reports particularly since 2016, there have been undeniable lopsided military recruitments going on in the country especially the indiscriminate enlistment of members of “the Civilian JTF”. Apart from the recent national security recruitment exercises marred by serious allegations of disproportional or sectional biases, there is also no clear evidence of conscription of “Civilian JTF” into the Nigerian Army since 2016 being matched with commensurate recruitment into the same Army of citizens of other geopolitical zones for the purpose of balancing the imbalances or filling the geopolitical gaps; all in accordance with the provisions of the existing Constitution of Nigeria 1999.

It is also most unlikely that there is religious proportion or balance among members of the “Civilian JTF” recruited into the Army or Armed Forces, Police and SSS since 2016. This is more so when there are established procedures for national recruitments into the Armed Forces and the Police. These include national advertisement, number of recruits needed and their qualifications and most importantly, their States of origin and geopolitical representations.

Most Nigerians are also not in the know of the rational and constitutional bases warranting indiscriminate enlistment of the so called “Civilian JTF” into the Nigerian Army. The citizens that make up the ranks of “Civilian JTF” are those drawn from the Northeast and possibly North-west and totally have nothing to do with citizens of the Southwest, South-south, Southeast and North-central regions. The Nigerian Armed Forces and the Nigerian Army are also not unknown to the existing Constitution of Nigeria 1999 as they are clearly created by Sections 217 up to 220 with their duties and functions under democratic or civil authority clearly prescribed.

SBCHROs, therefore, find it difficult or very hard to believe that the recruitments into the Nigerian Military since 2016 were and are still proportionately represented among the country’s ethno-religious divides or lines. Even in the recent national recruitments in the Nigeria Police Force and the SSS, serious allegations of sectional or ethno-religious biases or lopsidedness trailed same, how much more the recruitment of members of the “Civilian JTF” into the country’s Military particularly the Nigerian Army.

By the account of the Guardian Newspaper of November 7th 2018, about 400 anti-Boko Haram militias popularly known as Civilian-JTF were recently enlisted into the Nigerian Armed forces. This was disclosed by the Borno State Attorney-General and Commissioner of Justice, Kaka Shehu Lawan who said the 400 former members of the Civilian-JTF that supported military in counter-insurgency operations were enlisted into the Nigerian Army. Lawan disclosed this while addressing 103 newly recruited soldiers that completed their training at the Nigerian Army Training Depot at the Government House, Maiduguri. <https://globalsentinelng.com/2018/11/07/400-anti-boko-haram-militias-enlisted-into-nigerian-army/>

Also by the account of the Daily Trust Newspaper of 28th October 2018, a total of 3,878 newly recruited soldiers were recently passed out by the Nigerian Army. This was announced in Zaria by the COAS, Lt Gen Yusuf Turur Buratai during the passing out parade (POP) of the 77th Regular Recruits Intake where 3,878 soldiers were recently enlisted into the Nigerian Army. <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/army-enlists-3800-new-soldiers.html>. Most Nigerians are at loss as how these 3,878 newly recruited soldiers got into the Army and whether they were selected evenly or equitably across the country’s geopolitical divides or otherwise; bearing in mind the country’s multi ethnic and religious composition.

By the Premium Times Newspaper account of 22nd July 2016, a total of new “250 Civilian JTF” were enlisted into the Nigerian Army. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/207345-250-former-civilian-jtf-become-nigerian-soldiers-join-army.html>. By the Daily Trust Newspaper’s account of 13th December 2017, “Army, SSS and Police now recruit Civilian JTF members” and by the Punch Newspaper’s account of 24th July 2016, “Civilian JTF fighters now serve in Army, SSS and Police-says Civilian JTF Boss”. <https://punchng.com/ex-fighters-now-serving-army-dss-civilian-jtf-boss/>. Instances are too many to be exhausted here.

We are further worried because by the account of Sahara Reporters of 29th May 2018, “Nigeria has 181,000 total military personnel – 124,000 active personnel and 57,000 reserve personnel and ranks the fourth most powerful country in Africa and 43rd in the world according to Global Firepower 2018”. In addition, “Nigeria boasts of 124 aircraft strength comprising nine fighter aircraft, 21 attack aircraft, 52 transport aircraft, 47 trainer aircraft, 42 helicopters and 11 attack helicopters. Nigeria also has 148 armored tanks, 1420 fighting vehicles, 25 self-propelled artillery, 339 towed artillery and 30 rocket projectors”.

“For its Navy strength– its total naval assets is 75 which is made up of four frigates and 93 patrol crafts. It has no submarine and aircraft carrier. And with Defence budget of \$2.3billion (excluding \$1b police annual budgets and billions of others budgeted for other members of the internal security establishments). There is also officially given Nigeria Police staff strength of 291,685 (independently put at 371,000 police personnel) all put in place for the purpose of policing and protecting total Nigerian citizens’ population of 190,632,261”. This Nigerian security staff strength of 472,685 personnel does not include personnel of the SSS, NIA and members of the country’s para-militaries.

Sadly, there are still deepened citizens’ security disproportions or “first class”, “second class” and “third class” citizens’ security protection ratios in Nigeria largely fueled by lopsided recruitment, promotion, appointment and posting in the country’s present security establishments including Nigerian Army and Police. There are also disproportional responses of the Nigerian security agencies and their commanders to distress calls made by citizens in danger. Such responses are quick when it concerns “first class or born to rule citizens” and terse or total failure when it concerns “second class or third class” citizens.

The Nigerian security agencies particularly the Nigerian Army has severally come under serious criticism in recent times particularly from various State Governments, leadership of the National Assembly, human rights bodies, retired top military personnel as well as ethnic and religious associations including the Christian Association of Nigeria. The wide criticisms followed sectional handling of the security and safety of the citizens who are constantly in danger of losing their lives or properties. The partisanship of the Nigerian Military in the citizens’ security has been traced or linked to growing imbalances in the country’s current security establishments especially in the areas of recruitment, promotion, appointment and posting.

We therefore call on the Nigerian Armed Forces through the Defense Headquarters and the Nigerian Army to publicly explain to Nigerians whether the present Nigerian Armed Forces including the Nigerian Army are still truly composed or shaped in reflection of “the Nigerian Armed Forces” and the “Nigerian Army”. The Defense Headquarters and the leadership of the Nigerian Army should address a world press conference urgently and provide details of the enlistment of members of the “Civilian JTF” into the Military since 2016.

It is also our position that the current security policy of indiscriminate enlistment of members of the “Civilian JTF” into the Nigerian Army must be stopped and discontinued. Apart from its unconstitutionality, the policy is a serious threat to collective and individual security and safety of the citizens of Nigeria. The authorities of the Armed Forces and the Nigerian Army are also called upon to disclose under oath the patterns and trends of all their recruitments into the Military since 2016.

The details should include ***(a) how many members of the “Civilian JTF” have been enlisted into the Army, Navy, Air Force, SSS and NIA since 2016, (b) their States of origin, (c) their ethno-religious composition, (d) how many national and official military (army, navy and air force) recruitments have been carried out with full public knowledge since 2016, (e) their States of origin and numbers per State as well as ethno-religious composition, (f) when were the 3, 878 newly recruited soldiers that passed out recently recruited and through what modes (official or unofficial), (g) their States of origin, numbers per State and ethno-religious composition.***

We also call on the House of Reps and the Senate of Nigeria as well as the Governors’ Forums of Southeast, Southwest, South-south and North-central to rise to the occasion by proactively and courageously engaging the authorities of the Nigerian Military including the Nigerian Army on the issues of recruitment, promotion, appointment and posting in the country’s security establishments particularly the Armed Forces and the Police so as to ensure that their present compositions and leaderships are not ethno-religiously disproportioned or skewed.

Members and leaderships of the National Assembly should, as a matter of fact and urgency, investigate all the issues raised in this statement and ensure total absence of geopolitical victimization and lopsidedness in the country’s security and military establishments. The named Governors Forums are also called upon to use their good offices as chief security officers of their respective States and geopolitical zones to engage the Nigerian military and police leaderships and ensure that their qualified citizens are not schemed out of the military and policing recruitment, promotion, appointment and posting exercises in Nigeria.

For: SBCHROs

- * Int’l Society for Civil Liberties & the Rule of Law**
- * Civil Liberties Organization, Southeast Zone**
- * Centre for Human Rights & Peace Advocacy**
- * Human Rights Organization of Nigeria**
- * Society Watch & Advocacy Project**
- * Anambra Human Rights Forum**
- *Southeast Good Governance Forum**
- * Int’l Solidarity for Peace & Human Rights Initiative**
- * Igbo Ekunie Initiative**
- * Civil Liberties Organization, Anambra State Branch**

- * **Foundation for Environmental Rights Advocacy & Dev**
- * **Society for Economic Rights & Social Justice**
- * **Initiative for Ideal Dev & Emancipatory Leadership in Nigeria**
- * **Igbo National Council**
- * **Forum for Promotion of National Ethos & Values**
- * **Easy Life Initiative for Rural Youths**
- * **Voice of the Voiceless Int'l**
- * **Community Empowerment Network**
- * **Primate (Human Rights) Salvation Initiative**
- * **Igbo Bu Igbo Socio-cultural Foundation**
- * **Southeast Movement against Transactional Politics & Profligacy**