

80,115 Ghost Police Officers In Nigeria: Absence Of Answers To HOW, WHERE & WHEN Fuels Concerns & Suspicions Of Sectional Victimization

(Intersociety Nigeria: 28th March 2018)-The central Government of Muhammadu Buhari in Nigeria is at it again. The Government just announced without disclosure of investigative and procedural details that “there are 80,115 ghost police officers in the staff strength and payroll of the Nigeria Police Force”. By the Police Act of 2004, *a serving police officer in Nigeria is any sworn serving member of the Nigeria Police Force from the rank of Police Constable to Police Inspector General.*

As if this was not enough, the Chairman of INEC, Prof Mahmood Yakubu yesterday announced that 205 INEC staff have been suspended and replaced with “more competent hands” over “their various unwholesome roles in the 2015 general elections”. The announcement just like that of the “existence of 80,115 ghost police officers” was not attached with details showing the names of the staff, electoral offences allegedly committed, States or electoral districts where they allegedly committed the offences, the committees that investigated them and their findings, when they were investigated and existing laws under which they were investigated and being punished as well as the fate of other partners in the alleged offences, etc.

With respect to alleged 80,115 serving ghost police officers in Nigeria, media reports including the Premium Times report of 26th March 2018, quoting a data obtained from the Office of the Accountant General of the Federation and Nigeria’s Minister of Finance, Mrs Kemi Adeosun; *there are 80,115 ghost police officers in the staff strength and payroll of the Nigeria Police Force, from its previously quoted staff strength of 371, 800.*

The Minister was quoted as having made the disclosure last week Wednesday during the Federal Executive Council, where she presented an updated report of the Federal Government Integrated Payroll & Personnel Information System (IPPIS). The Minister further disclosed that the present staff strength of the Nigeria Police Force is “291, 685 from its 42 commands and formations”.

In the same ministerial report, the total staff strength of the Federal Government of Nigeria, said to have been updated as at February 2018 was put at 607, 843 including 469 MDAs with staff strength of 316, 158 and the Nigeria Police Force with “291, 685 serving police officers”. This was further broken down to 100,822 as total staff strength of Nigerian Custom Service, Nigerian Prisons Service, Nigerian Immigration Service, Nigerian Security & Civil Defense Corps and the Federal Road Safety Corps; all referred to “paramilitary formations”. Federal civil servants also accounted for 90,000 while the remaining 120, 000 others were drawn from the Armed Forces including the Nigerian Army, Nigerian Navy, Nigerian Air Force, State Security Service and the National Intelligence Agency.

Contradictorily, the Inspector General of Police, Alhaji Ibrahim Kpotum Idris had last month during the presentation of the proposed 2018 budget of the Nigeria Police Force at the National Assembly claimed *that, from the NPF updated records of December 2017 the NPF is presently populated by 300,892 officers and maintains 6,900 formations. The 6,900 police formations, according to him, include 12 Zonal and 37 State and FCT (Abuja) Commands, 128 Area Commands, 1,388 Divisional Commands, 1,579 Police Stations and 3,756 Police Posts. The IGP further claimed that the Force presently has a total of 14, 306 vehicles in its car fleet.*

By law, through the PSC Act of December 2001, the Nigeria Police Service Commission and Office of its Executive Chairman; followed by the IGP (via Police Act of 2004), is the firmer authority with database of the actual number of serving sworn police officers in Nigeria, from Police Constable to Police Inspector General. Such database, originally resided with PSC is also duplicated and maintained by the Office of the IGP and other relevant or key formations of the Force and oversight bodies across the country.

That is to say that the Nigeria Police Force is a well structured security establishment with its all its officers properly profiled, updated and managed through a database residing in the Office of the Chairman of PSC and the Police Service Commission. For purposes of recruitment, promotion or ranking, transfer, discipline including demotion, suspension and dismissal; the Police Service Commission (PSC) is statutorily in-charge. The PSC is headed by a chairmanship appointee with five years mandate alongside other members of the Commission drawn from the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. There also exists with monthly updates; two types of Police Staff Lists; namely: ASP-IGP and Constable-Inspector.

The said two staff lists are statutorily in the repository of the Police Service Commission and duplicated and maintained by the Office of IGP, Ministry of Police Affairs and possibly oversight legislative police committees at the National Assembly. The named staff lists are also periodically made available to serving senior police officers and others including ex senior police officers and any sworn member of the Force especially down to the rank of ASPs, etc on request.

The lists are updated monthly to accommodate new recruitments, promotions, demotions, suspensions, dismissals, postings, etc. Specifically contained in the two police staff lists are *officers' serial entry numbers, appointment numbers (AP Numbers for ASP-IGP), Force Numbers (F/Numbers) for Constable-Inspector, other names, surname, state of origin, local government of origin, date of birth, date of enlistment, date of last promotion, date of retirement, educational qualifications, academic discipline (in the case of tertiary institution graduates), current posting and date of posting.*

Apart from the above, the NPF through the Police Service Commission and the Nigeria Police Force Headquarters and their key formations across the country also have all their officers captured and regularly updated on its database using photographs, appointment numbers (AP No. for ASP-IGP), Force Numbers (F/No. for Constable-Inspector) and finger prints as case may be. That is to say that by keying into the police staff database with just appointment or force number by a police officer, his or her profile containing all basic information pertaining to his or her service instantly appears.

It is therefore, shocking and alarming how, in spite of the foregoing police staff database management and clearly established staff query processes, the Buhari's central Government of Nigeria still announced without concrete evidence that *the staff strength of the Nigeria Police is criminally over-shot by 27%.*

In other words, the NPF is overpopulated by 27% ghost police officers or 80, 115 out of 291,685 sworn police personnel. This is not only incredible and mindboggling, but also nothing short of recording another inglorious and dark feat. As a matter of fact, it is marks another disastrous entry by the Force into the dark side of the World Guinness Book of Records as *the Police organization in the world with largest number of ghost police officers or 27% of its police population being sworn ghost police personnel.*

We therefore seriously doubt the authenticity of this disclosure by the central Government of Nigeria. It is totally more of a fiction or a predetermined script until proven otherwise via unassailable details and evidence. In other words, it is deeply questionable, lacking in depth and rational conviction. The present Federal Government has severally used propaganda and falsehoods to mislead and deceive Nigerians. Misrepresentation of facts is also a routine in the Administration; thereby giving us at Intersociety as well as the generality of Nigerians every inch of reason to always doubt and challenge its pronouncements including that under advocacy scrutiny.

In early 2016, for instance, the country's Attorney General and Chief Law Officer declared in a public function in Abuja that "EFCC had recovered over \$2trillion loots since 2004"; whereas the total budgets made and spent by the entire 36 States and FCT, 774 LGAs and Federal Government in Nigeria between 2002 and 2016 were independently researched, computed and put at \$624billion. When the news of an army deserter broke out recently, the Nigerian Army, without investigation, dismissed same and described him as "a fake soldier". Instances are numerous to mention.

Absence of Answers to How, Where & When of 80,000 Ghost Police Officers in Nigeria & their Consequences: The Nigeria Police Force as the internal security centrepiece of Nigeria, congregating and aggregating Nigeria's over 380 ethnic nationalities including dominant Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa-Fulani as well as two dominant religions of Muslims and Christians must be carefully managed at all times particularly in matters of its staff and composition. This is more so when allegations of ethno-religious discrimination, lopsidedness, exclusion and victimization are very rife and on steady increase in Nigeria since June 2015.

That is to say that the Federal Government latest sketchy announcement of "existence of 80,115 ghost police officers in the NPF" is very weighty and sensitive, requiring probing questions and critical analyses by critical minds and genuine lovers of democracy and rule of law. The Government statement failed woefully to provide answers to *how, where and when of the 80,000 ghost police officers*. In other words answers to *how the 80,115 ghost police officers entered the staff strength and payroll of the NPF, how they were located or dictated and when or how long they have been there were woefully not provided*.

As reported by Premium Times and other media, not even the IGP or the Force PRO or the Chairman of Police Service Commission or key officials or commissioners of the PSC were with the Minister of Finance to elaborate and corroborate the Minister's report of the existence of the so called "80,115 ghost police officers in the NPF". The worse was that when the authorities of Premium Times sought the views of the IGP or the Force PRO and other serving senior police officers on the sensitive issue, they all absconded; thereby raising further suspicions of government ulterior motives.

Also, if truly there are "80,115 ghost police officers in the NPF", *why have the Chairman of PSC and IGP not spoken elaborately on such sensitive issue? Was there a presidential visitation panel set up to probe the staff strength and payrolls of the NPF? If yes, who were members of the panel? When was its report submitted and to whom? Who and who were indicted particularly at the Force Headquarters and the Police Service Commission? Was there also a well publicized ministerial or police or oversight panel so set up for same? If yes, who were its members? Who constituted it? When was its report submitted and to whom? Who and who were indicted?*

Why have heads not rolled vicariously at the Force Headquarters and the Police Service Commission? What are the Inspector General of Police and Chairman of Police Service Commission still doing in office on account of that and by virtue of their inescapable vicarious culpability? Also 80,115 ghost police officers is not a small number. What are their names and supposedly fake police entry particulars? What are the names of States and LGAs they were factored or captured as States and LGAs of their origin? What are their geopolitical, States and LGAs' breakdown? Since how long have they been on fake staff strength and payroll of the Nigeria Police Force and Federal Government of Nigeria?

Which senior Police Officers serving or retired as well as the officials of PSC and possibly legislative oversight officials and those of the Federal Ministry of Police Affairs have been pocketing their remunerations over the years? By the way, why did it take the central Government of Nigeria a whole of 33 months to discover '80,115 ghost police officers' in the staff strength and payroll of the Nigeria Police Force? Is it correct to say that the Federal Republic of Nigeria is being fully headed back to the era of "Hausa Constabulary" in the NPF?

Further, unless the central Government in Nigeria quickly and graphically provides answers to the questions above, otherwise, we at Intersociety, likewise most, if not all Nigerians will have every reason to credibly suspect and conclude correctly that this could be a ploy to effect widespread racial or religious cleansing in the NPF using the "ghost police workforce" mantra. It is shocking how over ¼ of the staff strength of the Police Force in this ICT age could exist as 'ghost sworn police officers' for years without dictation.

Therefore, the Federal Government of Nigeria must inexcusably come clean and clearer over its referenced mindboggling and incredible report of existence of 80,115 ghost police officers in the staff strength and payroll of the Nigeria Police Force. Nigerians demand to know how a staggering 27% of their country's police force is occupied by 'ghost police officers' unnoticed and unreported for years. The disclosure under firm demand must also give graphic details of a criminal gang of serving and retired senior police officers and their oversight and other civilian collaborators.

Apart from total answers to **how, where and when** of the 80,000 ghost police officers under demand; if truly this happened, then all the senior police officers including the IGP involved must be identified, retired, arrested and prosecuted with the criminal funds stolen from the scam, if true, fully recovered. The Chairman of PSC and all members of the PSC should also face the music including sack, arrest and prosecution.

We demand that the names of the so called "80,115 ghost police officers" be made public by ways of adverts, government public service announcements and news bulletins using internet, government websites, social media, government and private owned mainstream media including print and electronic. This will enable Nigerians and international watchers as well as possible innocent victims to have full details and enable them seek administrative, public and legal remedies and avoid being victimized by the Government.

Human rights groups and media practitioners are hereby called upon to forensically follow the development so as to ensure that the Government announcement is not a ploy or grand design to perpetrate racial or religious cleansing in the Nigeria Police Force or sweep the scam under the carpet if it truly happened as officially announced.

Signed:

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