

Akinyemi Flays Plan to Merge EFCC, ICPC

ThisDAY, 16 January 2008, Omololu Ogunmade, Davidson Iriekpen, and Chinyere Okoye

Former Minister of External Affairs, Professor Bolaji Akinyemi yesterday deplored moves by the Federal Government to merge two anti-corruption agencies, notably the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Crimes Commission (ICPC), saying promoters of the merger plan were ignorant of the workings of the law

This came on a day the former Economic and Financial Crimes Commission Chairman, Mallam Nuhu Ribadu made his first public appearance since the controversy over his posting to National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS) for training broke. Ribadu however said he has elected to remain silent over the controversy.

Akinyemi who spoke while fielding questions from newsmen at the venue of the 4th Gani Fawehinmi annual lecture in Lagos, where he served as the chairman of the occasion, said if those advocating the idea eventually succeed, it will be a grievous mistake.

He recalled that most security agencies today were initially part and parcel of the Nigeria Police Force before they were carved out as independent entities to perform functions which differ largely from that of the Police.

He noted that each of the anti-graft agencies has its own distinct functions which he said are by no means inter-woven.

"I think it will be a very grievous mistake. Don't let us forget that most agencies today started as the Nigeria Police Force. Such agencies like the Nigeria Customs Service, State Security Services (SSS), started as Police Force.

Then came the EFCC and the ICPC. So, why the move to merge them within eight years. They were set up to address two aspects of the law. It is ignorance of the law.

For instance, issues over assessment of properties doesn't concern the EFCC. That is the job of the Code of Conduct Bureau," Akinyemi said.

Akinyemi also appraised the anti-corruption war thus far and submitted that it has been a successful adventure, regretting that Nigerians are always impatient to pass judgements on ongoing exercises.

According to him, Nigerians do not believe that any exercise has succeeded unless it has recorded a 100 per cent success, explaining that as a university don, he could authoritatively state that both 60 per cent and 70 per cent respectively are higher grades in tertiary institutions.

He, therefore, noted that it would be wrong to hold the notion that the anti-corruption war has not succeeded because it has not been 100 per cent perfect, insisting that every institution has its own imperfections.

"We tend to be impatient in Nigeria. We always want 100 per cent result. As a university lecturer, 60 per cent, 70 per cent are upper credits. EFCC, ICPC have performed creditably. Every institution has its own shortcomings. You don't cut off an institution because of its shortcomings. Rome was not built in a day," Akinyemi stated.

In his remarks, former Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Mallam Nuhu Ribadu said he would remain silent in the face of controversies that trailed the decision of the Police High Command to send him on a one-year study leave to the National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru near Jos in Plateau State.

He noted that with the recent developments in the country, it was better for him to remain silent.

Ribadu, who made his first public appearance since the controversy which trailed his recent redeployment to Kuru responded to pressure by students of the University of Lagos and journalists who insisted that until he addressed the gathering, he won't leave the hall, said "Silence is Golden."

The EFCC boss who made a brief and surprise appearance at the Fourth Chief Gani Fawehinmi Lecture/Symposium, tagged: "Fawehinmism" and themed "Challenges of Legitimacy in Governance and the War Against Corruption", organised by the Ikeja branch of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), apparently did not want to make any public speech at the occasion until he was prompted to eulogise Chief Gani Fawehinmi, SAN.

"Every time I pray to God I pray that God should restore Gani's health because Nigeria needs him now more than before" he stated.

In his contribution at the event the former Attorney-General and Commissioner of Justice Lagos State, Professor Yemi Osibajo pointed out that the consequent of corruption is very great as it affect all area of life and in a situation where it is not punished it will become attractive to everybody.

"Nigeria is not so different from any other country of the world but the only different" according to him, "is that Nigeria does not take the fight against corruption very seriously, the war is left to very few individual in the society and this attitude can not help the country to move forward".

Justice Olubunmi Oyewole who was the special guest of honour at the occasion, also called on all Nigeria to join in the fight against corruption because it must not be left for the anti-corruption agencies alone to fight according to him everybody must get involved in the protection of our collective wealth.

"What we do as individuals expand the space for people's rights, corruption is evil and we have lot of it in the country so we must all contribute in one way or the other to the fight against this evil before its destroys our country" he said