

9th July, 2018

ACTS UNDERMINING CHRISTIANITY COMMITTED BY REV. DR. AYOKUNLE

It was announced by the Assistant General Secretary of CAN on 6th July, 2018 that the proposed Christian protest scheduled for 11th July, 2018, which was summoned by the President of CAN, Rev. Dr. Ayokunle has been postponed for “logistics” reasons. For those who have been observing the pattern of leadership of Dr. Ayokunle, what is strange is that he announced such a protest in the first instance. Going by his antecedents, the CAN President has established a pattern of frustrating any concrete action by Christians that will indict or condemn Islamists of northern Nigeria. This is the reason the NCEF repeatedly asked to know on whose side Dr. Ayokunle really stands.

The following incidents have been observed since he became President of CAN in July 2016:

1. Under the Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor Administration, NEC approved a CAN Strategy Document to build structures that would strengthen and protect Christianity. The NCEF handed this Strategy Document to Dr. Ayokunle on 2nd August, 2016 stressing the imperative of building Christian structures to protect the Church. In accepting the document, Dr. Ayokunle promised to set up an Implementation Committee and requested the NCEF to nominate three of its members to participate. The NCEF appointed the three members the same day and communicated same to the President of CAN through the General Secretary. Since then, despite many reminders, Dr. Ayokunle did nothing about implementing the Strategy plans for the Church. It would not have been worrisome if he had developed alternative plans of his for the Church. Unfortunately, the only defense he has offered the Church has been Press Statements which do not dent the conscience of the Islamists.
2. Frustrating Christian protest at US Congress in the wake of John Kerry’s visit to Nigeria in August 2016. Some Christian Lawyers and NCEF had jointly prepared a protest letter to the US Congress that the visit of the then Secretary of State was divisive and calculated to portray Nigeria as a Sultanate. All that was required was for the President of CAN to sign the letter so that it could be sent to Nigerian Christians in the US to mobilize protest at the US Congress. All the arrangements were in place. Suddenly, Dr. Ayokunle announced that the US Ambassador to Nigeria came to his office with a letter of apology. (This was not completely true. Someone came from the US Embassy to see him but it was not the Ambassador.) Consequently, he felt it would not be right for him to sign the letter of protest after accepting the letter of apology. When the issue was raised later, both the Vice

President of CAN, Prof. Otubu, and the late General Secretary, Dr. Asake, claimed they did not see the letter, neither were they privy to the decision to suspend the protest at the US Congress. This did not demonstrate compliance with Article 9, III(b) of CAN Constitution which states, “The President shall consult members of the President-in-Council or a majority of them before making public decision on behalf of CAN in an emergency situation or in urgent emergency the President can act on behalf of the Association and report back immediately to the President-in-Council”. Both the Vice-President and General Secretary, as principal officers, were in Abuja and they were neither contacted nor were they part of the decision to suspend protest at the US Congress. Both also claimed they did not see the letter.

3. In November 2016, the Vice President of CAN, Prof. Joseph Otubu, organized a Christian Leadership Retreat for CAN and invited Christian Executives, professionals as well as academics from Nigerian Universities to plan strategies for the new CAN Administration. This would have been added to the Strategy Document of 2015. Since the Retreat was done in November 2016 and the Report was submitted, Dr. Ayokunle frustrated implementation. In fact, on one occasion in which he was reminded about the need to commence implementation, he reacted angrily in writing.
4. Unilateral cancellation of the National Day of Christian Protest on 19th March, 2017. NEC passed a resolution during its meeting of 28th February, 2017 that Christians should observe a National Day of Mourning. A few days to the D-Day, Dr. Ayokunle called from outside the country requesting the Vice President of CAN, Prof. Otubu, to plead with Heads of Blocs to cancel the program based on information he received from Muslims that they would attack Christians if the protest should hold. Interestingly, the only Head of Bloc who insisted the program should go on was the CCN Head of Bloc. CAN President was later heard to change the narrative that it was the Heads of the Blocs who called him that he should cancel the program. It was cancelled at the instance of Dr. Ayokunle, without recourse to NEC that passed the resolution. That global protest would have gone a long way to expose and disarm the Islamists in northern Nigeria.
5. During the tenure of President Oritsejafor, arrangements were made for the President of CAN to meet with an American Congressman sympathetic to the Nigerian Christians plight. The meeting eventually came through on 28th March, 2017, after Dr. Ayokunle became the president of CAN. NCEF prepared a paper for the President of CAN focusing on the issues at stake in the country. Dr. Ayokunle refused to use the paper and rather presented a paper that started with tourism, TINAPA, mineral resources, Olumo Rock, Ikogosi Spring, Yankari Game Reserve, and so on. The first two pages of his seven page paper presented to the Congressman focused on tourism and investment. Is the President of CAN Minister of Commerce? Focusing the first two pages on issues absolutely unrelated to Christian persecution and Christian marginalization in Nigeria was a sure way of de-emphasizing the seriousness of the issues confronting the Church.

6. Refusal to sign the letter of protest to SSS/DSS on 28th February, 2017. After the SSS arrested Laity Trustees of the CAN Trust Fund, an agreement was reached on 15th February, 2017 between the NCEF and the President of CAN that NCEF would write a protest letter which would be signed by the President of CAN. After the letter was prepared, on 28th February, 2017 during the meeting of NEC, Dr. Ayokunle suddenly announced that he would not sign the letter. He delegated the task to the Legal Adviser of CAN. By the time the letter was eventually sent to the SSS, significant portion of the document had been deleted leaving a watery document to be sent. NCEF wrote 1,898 words letter for the President of CAN to sign on behalf of the Body of Christ. Between the President of CAN and Mr. Samuel Kwamkur the Legal Adviser, they edited the letter and reduced it to 890 words. Over 50% of what NCEF wrote in defense of Christianity was removed without the consent of NCEF. The compromised document was signed by Mr. Kwamkur and sent to SSS/DSS under the instruction of the CAN President. Dr. Ayokunle was later heard to claim that it was NEC that instructed him not to sign the letter. The statement is not true. NEC did not tell him not to sign; he announced to NEC that he would not sign. The conclusion of the NCEF is that Dr. Ayokunle refused to sign because he is a collaborator with the Islamists.
7. After series of meetings with various key leaders in politics and governance, NCEF requested a meeting with Christian leaders on 10th May, 2018 to discuss the issue of Jihad and Christian participation in governance in preparation for 2019. After granting approval, Dr. Ayokunle suddenly turned around and lied that he was never informed about the meeting and instructed that no Church leader should attend. To press his deception home, he lied that CAN Executive joined him in taking the decision to cancel the program. It was false. He acted alone. CAN Executive is made up of five members as follows: President, Vice President, General Secretary, Assistant General Secretary and Treasurer. Both the Vice President and General Secretary were not part of the decision while the Treasurer was not available during the period. So, which Executive took the decision? When this was pointed out to Dr. Ayokunle that CAN Executive could not have taken such decision, nothing has been heard from him since then.
8. When the NCEF insisted on proceeding with the meeting on the basis that the President of CAN had earlier given approval, Dr. Ayokunle told another lie that NEC joined him to take a decision that the National Christian Center should be locked up from being used for the meeting. Dr. Ayokunle is yet to reveal when NEC met in May 2018 to pass the resolution he referred to. Apparently, those whose interest Dr. Ayokunle is serving in CAN were not in favor of Christian leaders meeting to discuss Jihad and Christian participation in governance. **This is the reason Christians have not been able to form consensus for 2019. Dr. Ayokunle, the President of CAN, frustrated the efforts to build Christian consensus.** All these information are documented.
9. Since he took over as the Chairman of the CAN Trust Fund, Dr. Ayokunle ensured that the Trust Fund did not function. This prompted the Coordinator of the Trust

Fund to petition NEC listing nine acts of deliberate sabotage against the Trust Fund by Dr. Ayokunle. The Coordinator pointed out that as a result of these acts of sabotage, the performance of the Trust Fund was 0.019% in 2017. After NEC ordered an investigation, Dr. Ayokunle employed underhand tactics to dismantle the Board of Trustees. The dissolution is illegal, null and void. By frustrating the CAN Trust Fund, Dr. Ayokunle struck at the heart of Christian response to threats against Christianity. If the Church is unable to fund its strategic initiatives, it would suffer defeat and be destroyed.

10. The latest occurrence is the protest slated for 11th July 2018 which has now been suspended for “logistics” reasons. While the Acting General Secretary, Mr. Daramola, claimed the program was postponed due to “logistics” reason, the President of CAN in a recorded video interview claimed it was “God” who told him to cancel it. The two CAN officials contradict each other. Whoever is surprised does not know the conflict of interests playing out in CAN. It definitely is not in the interest of Christians.

Now is not the time for prayers alone, but prayers and action. President of CAN must be compelled to give Christians in Nigeria a new date for the protest or else the program should be considered permanently cancelled. However, if the CAN President contest any of these disclosures, on the ground that his character is maligned, NEC should order an investigation to confirm the veracity or otherwise of these issues.

The NCEF makes these disclosures without malice or any ill-will but in the fear of God and in the collective interest of all Christians in Nigeria. The dangers facing Christians in the country are real and Christian leadership in this troublous period should be committed and passionate about protecting Christian interests and not personal interests. NCEF appeals to members of NEC not to misplace loyalty. Inasmuch as it is Christian virtue to defend one another, it should be remembered that loyalty is primarily to Jesus Christ our Lord and it is to the Lord that all men shall report one day. It is written, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; ...” 2 Cor. 5: 10.

National Christian Elders Forum (NCEF)

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