Olawepo-Hashim: we will rekindle national unity

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•Southwest supporters back PDP chieftain’s presidential bid  
  
A former presidential candidate and chieftain of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Dr. Gbenga Olawepo-Hashim, has restated his commitment to repairing what he called the damaged bridges of national unity.  
  
He said this arose from the alleged manipulation of Nigeria’s ethnic and religious fault lines by those he called desperate and failed politicians.  
  
The PDP chieftain said such politicians use divisive strategies, such as zoning and other extra-constitutional measures, to hold the nation’s polity to ransom.  
  
Olawepo-Hashim said this during an interaction with senior media executives over the weekend in Lagos.  
  
He said: “Despite the fact that Nigeria’s electorates have demonstrated over and over again that they care less about where a leader comes from, a new tribe of political opportunists continues to distract the nation and the polity from clear issues of economic development and security. This is the urgent concern of most Nigerians, whether they are Northerners or Southerners.”  
  
At the end of the NEC meeting of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Abuja last week, the party zoned the 2027 presidential ticket to the South.  
  
This has sparked dissent among party members, especially from the North. Many of them have called the decision retrogressive and against the Constitution, adding that it is capable of pitching the North against the South.  
  
Also, leaders of the Gbenga Hashim Solidarity Movement (GHSM) in the Southwest have declared their unwavering support for the presidential aspiration of Dr. Gbenga Olawepo-Hashim.  
  
They threatened to resist what they called the “unconstitutional zoning error” of the presidency by the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).  
  
The Southwest supporters resolved at the weekend during a strategic meeting of GHSM leaders, which comprised mostly PDP leaders from the region.  
  
The meeting, which was held in Lagos, was attended by members from Osun, Oyo, Ekiti, Ondo, Ogun, and Lagos states.  
  
Addressing reporters after the meeting, the Southwest Coordinator of GHSM, Alhaji Abass Olaniyi, from Osun State, said Nigerians must rally behind leaders whose politics is built on competence, inclusiveness, and national development, rather than sectional considerations.  
  
“We want to make it very clear that the Southwest will not sit idly by while regressive forces within the PDP try to truncate the aspiration of a visionary leader like Dr. Gbenga Olawepo-Hashim through unconstitutional zoning.  
  
“Nigerians are ready for a truly ideological presidency, not the politics of ethnicity and sectional manipulation,” Olaniyi said.  
  
The GHSM leaders stressed that the Southwest remained resolute in its decision to deliver the region’s votes to ensure that Olawepo-Hashim emerges victorious in 2027.  
  
They described the PDP stalwart as the most prepared among the potential candidates.  
  
The Lagos State GHSM Coordinator, Ola Azeez, noted that despite having a Lagosian as the Nigerian President, the masses were suffering.  
  
“We are ready to support a leader with a detribalised orientation, who is competent,” Azeez said.  
  
Other leaders at the meeting said Olawepo-Hashim represents a new paradigm of leadership, combining experience in the private and public sectors with a strong record of advocacy for democracy, social justice, and economic reforms.  
  
They argued that Nigeria’s current challenges, including insecurity, economic downturn, unemployment, and national disunity, demand a president who possesses both intellectual grounding and moral conviction to steer the country towards sustainable progress.  
  
The GHSM leaders recalled Olawepo-Hashim’s long-standing involvement in Nigeria’s democratic struggle, his consistent calls for issue-based politics, and his refusal to engage in the politics of patronage that has weakened many of his contemporaries.  
  
After extensive deliberations, the Southwest bloc of GHSM resolved to intensify grassroots mobilisation, enlightenment campaigns, and alliance-building across the country to strengthen Olawepo-Hashim’s candidacy ahead of the 2027 general election.  
  
“Nigeria cannot afford to repeat the mistakes of the past. What the country needs now is not zoning but competence. Dr. Olawepo-Hashim has the ideology, the character, and the vision to lead Nigeria into a new era of stability, prosperity, and unity,” he said.  
  
The Southwest GHSM leaders also pledged to resist attempts within the PDP to enforce zoning, insisting that such an arrangement lacked constitutional backing and undermined the democratic rights of citizens to aspire to the presidency.  
  
They described it as a violation of Section 84 of the Electoral Act.