**PRESS STATEMENT**

**ADP CONDEMNS** **HOSTILITIES ON HERDSMEN IN ONDO, OGUN AND SOUTH-EASTERN STATES TO GET REGISTERED**

The recent directive by the Governor of Ondo State, Chief Rotimi Akeredolu, SAN, to Fulani Herdsmen in the state to come out and specially get registered, has sparked-off spiral reactions and effects on other Southern state of the federation which has also smacked of selectiveness and discriminatory use of executive powers that does not augur well for peace, harmony and unity of the country in the short and long run.

It is particularly worrisome, disturbing and curious that, the directive came from a governor, the Chief Security Officer of a state and one, who is celebrated as a legal luminary with the status of a Senior Advocate of Nigeria. In his position as one of the outstanding political leaders in the country, the Ondo state Governor is expected to have known the political implications potentially resulting from such a decision. As a Chief Security officer of a state, Chief Akeredolu would have been expected to be more cautious and circumspect in the knowledge of the likely repercussions on social interaction, cohesion and security among the divergent communities in the state. Given his background as a legal practitioner of eminence, should Rotimi Akeredolu not to have known better than the ordinary citizens of the legal implications and constitutional correctness or otherwise of a patently discriminatory law that has all the tendencies of denying a Nigerian the right to free movement and residence in any part of the country? Is the situation in Ondo State so peculiar and intricate that no other way out but this hasty and simplistic sweeping approach?

The Action Democratic Party (**ADP**) along with discerning courageous Nigerians have since been warning of the dangers posed to collective peace and amity of the country by the festering phenomenon of kidnapping and incessant clashes between herdsmen and farmers, in which the perpetrators/offenders have been identified as criminal elements among the Fulani herdsmen. The ADP for instance, has consistently and severally called on the APC-led Federal Government to think out of the box by devising the appropriate, effective even if, informal panacea to tame the dangerous monster before it becomes too monstrous to handle. It will appear that we have now got to that point.

The ADP had pointed to some of the imminent and likely consequences if the quagmire was allowed to linger. Our observations have been centred on:

1. The danger of citizens resorting to self-help as a result of failure of the state to provide needed protection and security;
2. The tendency of escalation due to over-confidence and sense of invincibility by those criminal elements arising from the lack of action by the state through diligent investigation, detection, arrest, prosecution and application of appropriate sanctions;
3. The danger of a large number of our youth, unemployed and poor as majority of them are, swelling up the army of the criminals, lured by the prospects of quick and easy material fortunes.
4. The danger of opportunistic criminally-minded individuals and politicians hijacking the unfortunate phenomenon to advance their unpatriotic, divisive agenda of heating up the polity or even, triggering major civil unrest towards actualization of their ultimate goal of balkanizing the country;
5. The discernable, shadowy hands of politicians with eyes on 2023 are manipulating the imbroglio in advance narrow goals of ascendancy and control of power.

Recent developments related to the crises have clearly vindicated the perception, prognosis and concern long expressed by the ADP. We have seen in the preceding weeks, the emergence of the Eastern Security Network, the creation of the secessionist IPOB in the South East geopolitical zone. The regional, ethnic militia has since begun to unleash mayhem specifically targeted at the Fulani Herdsmen. The reported sacking of a Fulani settlement in **Isikwuato** in Abia State and the general blanket quit order given to Fulani in the entire South-East by IPOB, is one of such instances of the spread and escalation of the smoldering inferno. From the South-West, individuals such as a Sunday Ighoho have lately embarked on burning Fulani settlements in pursuance of a declared mission to “rid Yoruba land of criminal Fulani elements”.

The above two instances illustrate the ADP’s strident and repeated warnings that rogue and unpatriotic elements would opportunistically seize on the crises to advance their nefarious agenda of hoisting anomie on the country.

The ADP wishes to call on the governor of Ondo State to as a matter of urgency and in the interest of peace and security, magnanimously adopt measures to diffuse the emerging ominous dark cloud gathering in the firmament of the state and which, appears to be dangerously fanning out to other parts of the country. That, to us, is not a show of cowardice or inconsistency of character but, the path and wisest choice for a leader, a statesman and a man of towering education and experience in such a critical situation. One of the feasible options in the circumstance, the ADP will suggest, is for the Ondo State governor to engage the state and national leaderships of the Fulani in a dialogue, extracting assurances of collaboration and support of law-abiding members of the community (Fulani) with the government in the prevention, detection, arrest and legal action against criminal elements who apparently inhabit the forests with them and who, camouflage as herders.

The ADP acknowledges the fact that the Ondo State government and any other state governments can only do as much as they can within the ambits of the law and obviously limited resources available to them. The onus as far as securing the citizens is concerned, rests squarely and constitutionally with the Federal Government. Unfortunately, the unflattering verdict on this subject is that, the APC government under President Buhari is tardy, wobbly and hazy. With President Buhari, clearly, Nigerians have little reasons to hope that the security can be better.

Be that as it may however, the Action Democratic Party is constrained to once again reiterate its suspicion that Nigerians should not rule out the evil hands of over-ambitious politicians who cannot be bothered with the consequences of their evil machinations. With the game plan of intimidation, blackmail and brinkmanship, the shadowy hands manipulating Nigerians against each other are hoping to gaining political windfalls in 2023. They MUST be resisted!

**ENGR. YY SANI**

**NATIONAL CHAIRMAN**