



THE NEED FOR HOME-GROWN DEMOCRACY

His Excellency, AVM Mukhtar Muhammad

I just want to make a few comments on the issues raised here, and I think it is very relevant because even the organisers have realised that there are various types of democracies, and they have now settled on finding one that is sustainable. We must also realise that this democracy is not like a book where if you open page 1 – that is being in Military rule and now you are on page 2 – in a democratic setting and everything else will change. I think we are learning the hard way now. We need to address the question “Do we really have the enabling environment for the democracy we have imported from wherever it is to survive and flourish in our setting, especially considering the level of ignorance, illiteracy, poverty and of course the Nigerian factor?”

We have seen all these at play, where poverty and when I say poverty, it is not limited to material poverty. There are various types of poverty that have made people to come to the polling booths and raise a leaf that they want to sell their votes, or sell their conscience. This happens at all levels in our society, but where you have the people we look up to as leaders will sit down in a group, in a pre-meditated meeting, to subvert the rule of law or agreed laws of playing the game as Chief Mike Ahamba said, where do we go from there?

The sad thing is that they are all in agreement because so far we have not seen anyone coming out to say “Hey Nigerians, to be honest with you I feel bad I was a party to this organised crime and now I feel very bad. My conscience is pricking me and I want your forgiveness.” We have not yet seen that happening; everybody has agreed that what was done was correct and that the end justifies the means.

Mr Chairman, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, are we really on the right path? Democracy may be is the only one we know, even though we know that socialism and communism exist elsewhere. Let us honestly ask ourselves whether the version of democracy we imported is the best for us or not.

In his presentation, Chief Mike Ahamba defined democracy. I also heard another definition that defines democracy as “Tyranny of numbers.” By this the mean if 50.5% say yes, the views of 49.5% does not matter. In a situation where we are many nations in one, with some bigger than others numerically, are these kinds of games going to work for us?

It means some groups because of their small number may be heard but their views never matter. You say democracy gives you a chance to be heard, what does it matter if my views are heard but my problems are not addressed. You can always go to Sam Nda Isiah and tell him your story and he can put you in the Newspaper your views will be heard but will your views be done?

They said that the views of the majority will be done but the voice of the minority will be heard. Heard? What does that do for us? So let us address these issues; we need to find out whether or not we are on the right path before we come to the realities of its not working. Since it is not working, can we ever make it work or are we ab-intio not on the correct path? May be these are some of the issues the real practicing politicians, not the so-called soldier-turned politicians because our own is one-way and this system of doing things in many ways and at the end of the day you don't reach your goal must be addressed.

I think we have heard excellent presentations from all the speakers and they have raised very important points and we must not lose sight of the realities they raised in these papers. Let us address them and somehow, maybe we should go back to the drawing board. Let us not be ashamed and see what we can do to address the situation we find ourselves in. Even if we have to call it democracy, let us go and fashion out one that will be suitable and practicable within our own environment and circumstances.

Thank you very much for listening.

ABOUT AIR VICE MARSHALL (AVM) MUKHTAR MUHAMMAD



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