

Women Against Rape, Sexual Harassment and Sexual Exploitation (WARSHE)

Press Release

29th April 2009

Stop the Harassment and Intimidation of Mrs Ayoka Adebayo, the Resident Electoral Commissioner for Ekiti State.

Following the re-run of the elections in Ekiti State, the Resident Electoral Commissioner (REC), Mrs Ayoka Adebayo according to media reports, wrote to inform the President, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua that her conscience as a Christian cannot allow her to further participate in the process. She indicated that "the circumstances changed in the middle of the process." The media have indicated that she has since gone into hiding, and the Nigeria Police has threatened to declare her wanted.

As a women's rights organization, we are worried that Mrs Adebayo felt so uncomfortable with what she saw "in the middle of the process" in the rerun of the election in Ekiti State, that she sent a letter of resignation to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. More worrisome is the fact that she felt so threatened, she went into hiding. Now a few questions are relevant here: What did she see? Which group (s) threatened or are threatening her? Why are they threatening her?

Remarkably, the Nigeria Police did not help matters when they threatened they would declare her wanted. Why would the Police threaten to declare her wanted? Wanted for what crime? Is it a crime to hide when you have been threatened and you feel unsafe? Of course we expect that the Federal Government would interact with the 74 year old REC, who is the Returning Officer for the elections in Ekiti State. We believe that if she is convinced that the Police would give her adequate protection, she would attend scheduled meetings with the Federal Government.

As Nigerians who worry incessantly about the state of our nation, we support Mrs Ayoka's decision to throw in the towel because she felt uncomfortable with what was going on "in the middle of the process" of the rerun of the elections in Ekiti State. We expect women who hold public office to always act true to their conscience. We believe that if the few women and the many men who hold public office have the vision of a better Nigeria, and they allow the law and good conscience to be the frameworks that guide their actions, Nigeria will soon rank high in the comity of nations.

Our Demands:

We

- 1) Call on the President, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua to personally guarantee the safety of Mrs Ayoka Adebayo, so that she could spell out the details of what happened “in the middle of the process”, and the persons who threatened her;
- 2) plead that Mrs Ayoka Adebayo should withdraw her resignation letter, conclude and declare the results of the election in Ekiti State according to the rule of law and the dictates of her conscience, once the president has personally guaranteed her safety, and there is evidence that the Federal Government takes the matter of her safety seriously
- 3) appeal to all stakeholders in Ekiti State to take a broader view of what the rerun of the election holds for Ekiti State, not for parties and not for individuals. They should therefore allow Mrs Ayoka Adebayo to carry out her duties in Ekiti State.

Signed
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Signed
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