

Social mobilization in Nigeria

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Pressured by a massive general strike, the Nigerian government is forced to negotiate. Perhaps this is the first step towards questioning a destructive liberal policy.



Bola Tinubu. Wikimedia commons / Nosa Asemota / Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0

A year after being elected, with one of the lowest scores in the country's history, Bola Tinubu embarked on a particularly violent austerity policy against the population. These measures were applauded by the international financial institutions, despite their deleterious consequences.

LIBERAL CREDO

In response to years of economic crisis, Tinubu is taking a hard line. The first measure was to end fuel subsidies. As a result, the price of petrol tripled, driving up transport costs. Another measure is to stop supporting the national currency, the naira. The naira has fallen by 70% in the last year, fuelling inflation. Almost all foodstuffs and medicines are imported, as a result of the decision by successive elites to bet everything on oil exploitation.

Inflation has risen by 35% and by much more for certain products. A derika (measuring bowl) of rice, for example, used to cost 500 naira; it is now worth 1,200 naira. Poor people now eat just one meal a day. As for social support measures for the poorest, such as the payment of allowances or foodstuffs, they remain insufficient and do not necessarily reach the target populations because of corruption.

The 'truth in pricing' policy, which is supposed to attract capital from foreign investors, is far from being a success. Multinationals such as Procter & Gamble (USA), GSK (UK) and Bayer (Germany) are leaving the country.

Obviously, the efforts required do not apply to everyone. Nigerians were surprised to learn that President Tinubu, who is urging his compatriots to make an effort, has approved a budget supplement allowing the purchase of a presidential yacht and a luxury car for each senator.

Negotiation phase

Faced with such attacks, the two trade union organizations, the Nigeria Labour Congress and the Trade Union Congress, called an unlimited general strike from Monday 3 June.

The country came to a standstill, forcing the government to open continuous negotiations for a week

and to undertake not to punish any strikers. The unions suspended the strike during the talks. The government is proposing to double the minimum wage to 60,000 naira (€35), while the unions are demanding 494,000 naira (€300).

This struggle could significantly improve the balance of power in favour of the people, as the Socialist Workers League points out: 'At this pivotal moment, we also call on civil society organisations, students, community groups and all progressive forces to support the NLC and the TUC. Let's stand together, because our collective strength lies in our unity. Together, we can build a society that guarantees social and economic justice for all.

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