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FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

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**FEDERAL GOVERNMENT VIEWS  
ON THE  
REPORT OF THE TRIBUNAL OF INQUIRY  
ON THE  
UNIVERSITY OF IFE STUDENTS INCIDENT**

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## GOVERNMENT VIEWS ON THE REPORT OF THE TRIBUNAL OF INQUIRY ON THE UNIVERSITY OF IFE STUDENTS INCIDENT

As a result of the incident which led to the deaths of some students of the University of Ife on 7th June, 1981, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federation, Alhaji Shehu Usman Aliyu Shagari, constituted and appointed on the 16th of June, 1981, the University of Ife Students' Incident Tribunal of Inquiry, with the Honourable Mr Justice Salihu Moddibo Alfa Belgore, as Chairman and Mr James Taggart and Mr S. J. Okudu as members of the Tribunal.

2. The Tribunal's terms of reference were as follows :—

(a) to ascertain the circumstances leading to the embarkation on a procession from the University campus to Ile Ife town by the said students ;

(b) to ascertain the kind of relationship and interaction, if any, that existed between the said students and members of the Nigeria Police on and about the day on which the incident took place ;

(c) to determine the circumstances leading to the death of some of the students during the course of the said procession and determine whether any member of the Nigeria Police Force or of the student body or any other person, by conduct or negligence, in any way caused or contributed to the death of the students or any of them and make recommendations as to measures to be taken against any such person or persons ;

(d) to ascertain the extent of loss of lives or injuries to persons and loss of, or damage to, property as a result of the incident ;

(e) to make recommendations on how to avoid such unfortunate incidents in future ; and

(f) to examine any other matters incidental to the foregoing and make recommendations generally thereon.

3. The Tribunal commenced its first public sitting on Wednesday, 1st of July, 1981. It heard oral evidence from a total of 42 witnesses, visited several places in Ile Ife affected by the disturbances, commissioned expert evidence on electricity and obtained a total of 87 exhibits during the hearing. The Tribunal submitted its report on the 29th of September, 1981.

4. *Findings.*—On the basis of the investigation it carried out and of the evidence taken during the public hearing as well as visits to various locations, the Tribunal found that :—

(i) there was a tense situation in Ile Ife following the Modakeke/Ife riots of April 13 to 15, 1981, during which human beings were openly slaughtered and mutilated in a manner indicating ritual sacrifice. (Part II, Chapter 1, 2.3 and 2, 4).

(ii) This situation gave rise within the University of Ife to lots of rumours and apprehension with regard to security of life which became heightened by the discovery of a headless body at Odo Ogbe on 1st June, 1981 identified on 4th June, 1981 as that of Bukola Arogundade, a student of the University of Ife. (Part II, Chapter, 1, 2.7-2. 17).

(iii) When the news of Mr Arogundade's murder reached the University, Messrs Femi Kuku and Gbolahan Gbadamosi, President and Secretary-General respectively of the Student's Union, engaged in activities which triggered off the disturbances of 7th June, 1981 including calling the congress of the student body which met on the 6th of June, 1981 and resolved that the student body should undertake a procession to pay their last respects to their deceased colleague. (Part II, Chapter 2, 2.31-2. 44).

(iv) On learning of the intention of the Students to undertake this procession or demonstration, the Police left the student leaders in no doubt that they would not be granted a permit to demonstrate and in fact rejected such an application when it was made. (Part II, Chapter 2, 2.61 and Part II, Chapter 1, 3.1-3.5).

(v) Although the student leaders deceived the Police into believing that the students were no longer embarking on their procession the Police took the precaution to provide extra security cover around the Police Station and the Ooni's palace, and occasionally patrolled between those two places and the gate of the University. But despite those measures the Police on patrol duties were surprised about 10 a.m. on the morning of Sunday, 7th June, 1981 to find a column of several thousand students greatly outnumbering them, well out of the gate of the University campus. (Part III, Chapter I, 3.10-3.28).

(vi) The main body of the students were driven back into their campus by the Police, but thereafter the bodies of four students, Mr Paul Alonge, a 40-year old Associateship student in Education, Miss Wemimo Akinbolu, a 23-year old part III Arts student, Miss Fatimo Adebimpe, a 22-year old part II Education student and Miss Dorcas Ojewole, a 19-year old part I Arts student, were found clustered round an advertisement post connected to the Mayfair Hotel by an electric cable. (Part III, Chapter I, 3.28 and Part IV, Chapter 2, 4.12-16).

(vii) The four students who died during the demonstration were electrocuted from the leakage of electricity into a metallic advertisement pole in a stagnant pool of water in front of Mayfair Hotel, Ile Ife. (Part IV, Chapter 5, 4.52).

(viii) Several thousands of students took part in the demonstration of 7th June, 1981 and of that number a large proportion were male students. Many students were injured, 74 of whom were treated for bruises and minor injuries. A number of properties were destroyed; a Police post within the University was burnt and two cars, one belonging to the Nigeria Police and the other belonging to Oranmiyan Local Government Council were burnt. (Part V).

#### *Comments :*

Government notes these findings.

5. *Observation.*—From the evidence given before it during the hearing the Tribunal made the following observations :—

(i) the students were under the impression that the decisions or resolutions of the Congress of the Students' Union were final and binding on them irrespective of whether such decisions were in contravention of the law setting up the University or inconsistent with the Laws of the Land and the Constitution of this country. (Part VI, Chapter 1, 6.2).

(ii) the University of Ife statute, especially Sections 31, 32 and 33 did not make exhaustive prescriptions against possible acts of misconduct for which the students should be disciplined. (Part VI, Chapter 1, 6.7).

(iii) teargas is the cheapest and safest means the Police could use to disperse an unlawful assembly. However, the teargas cannisters used by the Police on the 7th of June, 1981 were long expired and other Police equipment and facilities inadequate. The problems of poor conditions of service, lack of barracks facilities and lack of adequate equipment confronting the Police, inhibited them in the effective discharge of their duties. But the method used by the Police to disperse the students during the incident was reasonable and inevitable. (Part VI, Chapters 2 and 3).

(iv) Mr Bukola Arogundade, the student of the University of Ife whose headless body was found at Odo Ogbe may have been killed for ritual purposes, and there appears to be evidence of murders based on ritual tendencies. (Part VII, Chapter 1, 7.1-7.18).

(v) There is only one Forensic Laboratory at Oshodi in Lagos which the Police uses for advanced scientific blood analysis. (Part VII, Chapter 1, 7.20).

(vi) Students/Police relationship could be improved by better education of the Police about students.

(vii) The University of Ife is one of those Universities where admission is based mainly on educational qualifications without regard to the age of the applicant. The resultant effect was that more than half of the students' population of that University was made up of those under eighteen years of age who could not be associated ordinarily with maturity. (Part VI, Chapter 1, 6.10).

(viii) Some members of the Academic Staff Union of the Universities in the University of Ife exerted unwholesome influence on the students during the inquiry, including the purported setting-up of an Administrative Panel into the incident to run in parallel with the Tribunal and an attempt to set up an independent investigation on the post mortem examination conducted on the dead students to fish for falsehood in the presence of overwhelming truth. (Part VII, Chapter 3).

*Comment :*

(a) Government notes this recommendation and deplores the possibility that ritual murders might have taken place in Ile-Ife.

(b) Government also deprecates the behaviour of some members of the Academic Staff of the University of Ife who tried to interfere with the proceedings of the Tribunal to the detriment of truth and justice.

(c) The University is required to re-examine the issue of minimum age for admission.

## 6. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. The Tribunal recommends that :—

(a) the Constitution of the Students' Union which makes the Students Congress a supreme body, as well as other parts which are repugnant to democratic process, the laws of the University and the Constitution should be re-drafted.

(b) The University authorities should be intimated from time to time of any changes in the Union's Constitution for guidance.

(c) Students found guilty of contravening provisions of the students Union constitution should, after due process of trial by the University authorities, be seriously disciplined.

(d) The Students' Union leaders who breached the law of the land and defied the authorities of the University in embarking on the demonstration should be put on trial as provided for in the statutes of the University of Ife. Those of them found guilty must be seriously disciplined. This relates in particular to Mr Femi Kuku, President, Mr Gbolahan Gbadamosi, Secretary-General of the Students' Union and other members of the Central Executive of the Union for their failure to divulge further and compelling reasons why the students should embark on the demonstration of 7th June, 1981. (Part III, Chapter 7, 4.78 and Part VIII, 8, 2.2).

*Comment :*

Government accepts these recommendations and commends them to the authorities of the University of Ife for appropriate action.

### 2. The Tribunal recommends that :—

All killings during the Modakeke/Ife riots in April 1981 especially those of the men burnt at Oke Mogun in front of Ogun Shrine and that of Bukola Arogundade should be thoroughly investigated by the Police and the culprits brought to book. (Part VIII, 8.6).

*Comment :*

Government accepts this recommendation.

3. The Tribunal recommends that :—

(a) Wherever in the country, advertisement poles are erected they should be examined by those firms erecting them and the National Electric Power Authority to ensure that there is no possibility of electrical leakages. Any such poles erected without the authorisation of NEPA should be dismantled;

(b) As regard the installation of the pole in front of Mayfair Hotel, which was faulty and for which negligence the Nigerian Tobacco Company Ltd. was responsible, NEPA should take appropriate steps to enforce their law and regulations against the Nigerian Tobacco Company Ltd.

*Comment :*

Government accept these recommendations without prejudice to the rights of the representatives of the deceased students to take legal action against the Nigerian Tobacco Company Ltd. Further, the Federal Minister of Mines and Power will take appropriate measures to ensure regular inspection of electrical installations on advertisement poles throughout the Federation.

4. The Tribunal recommends that :—

(a) Experienced Police Officers should be posted to most of the University towns as Divisional Police Officers ;

(b) Police Officers should be given some training in students problems during refresher courses ;

(c) Seminars should be organised for members of the staff of Universities/Students and Police on matters connected with Police/Students relationships, public order laws, crowd control, etc., to enable the University Community and the Police to understand each other better.

(d) If teargas has to be used in dispersing a crowd during a demonstration unexpired cannisters should be used to reduce the number. (Part VIII, 8.8).

*Comment :*

Government accepts these recommendations. As much as possible, teargas cannisters in the best condition will be used in dispersal of crowds during demonstrations.

5. The Tribunal recommends that :—

(a) The Police should be provided with suitable equipment for their work ;

(b) The Police Force should be staffed with men of the right calibre who are given the right type of training for their responsibilities ;

(c) Serving Officers or men who acquire new knowledge or qualifications should be encouraged by promotion or cash awards, as appropriate. (Part VIII, 8.10).

*Comment :*

Government notes these recommendations which accord with existing government policy.

6. The Tribunal recommends that :—

No restitution should be made for the two cars burnt during the disturbances. However, the Police post within the University should be rebuilt and provided with better communication equipment and security installations. (Part VIII, 8.12).

*Comment :*

Government accepts these recommendations.

7. The Tribunal recommends that :—

Out of compassion for the tragic loss of the four students, the Federal Government should make some *ex-gratia* payments to the families or the dependants of the students who died during the incident. (Part VIII, 8.14).

*Comment :*

While the Federal Government sympathises with the families of the deceased, Government does not accept the recommendation for *ex-gratia* payment. Rather, Government directs the Nigeria Police to investigate with a view to prosecuting the Nigerian Tobacco Company Ltd., the proprietor of Mayfair Hotel, Ile-Ife, and any other person connected with the criminal negligence which occasioned the electricity discharges from the Nigerian Tobacco Company Ltd. advertisement facility.

8. The Tribunal recommends that :—

No *ex-gratia* payment should be made to any of the students who were injured. (Part VIII, 8.16).

*Comment :*

Government accepts this recommendation.

9. The Tribunal recommends that :—

All the Statutes of the Universities be amended to take into consideration the prevention of Commission of misconduct, etc. that are envisaged in the provisions for punishment of students in Sections 31, 32 and 33 of the University of Ife Edict, 1970. (Part VIII, 8.18).

*Comment :*

Government does not accept this recommendation as University authorities already have sufficient power to discipline erring students.

10. The Tribunal recommends that :—

(a) Teargas should continue as a primary weapon for dispersing an unlawful assembly ;

(b) Teargas to be used should be current and not expired ;

(c) Mark IV gun should be phased out in favour of modern rifles. (Part VIII, 8.24).

*Comment :*

Government notes these recommendations.

11. The Tribunal recommends that :—

The Police should always liaise with the Students' Union leaders and the University Authorities when an application is made by students for a permit to embark on demonstrations and processions. Such permits should not be unreasonably withheld. (Part VIII, 8.26).

*Comment :*

Government accepts this recommendation.

12. The Tribunal recommends that :—

Statutes of all Universities should provide for the establishment of Students' Unions within the Universities and the Senate of the Universities should provide guidelines on the Constitution of the Union, which should not contain provisions which are in conflict with the Statute of the University, the Laws of the land and the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. (Part VI, Chapter 1, 6.6).

*Comment :*

Government notes this recommendation. Where students decide to form a Union, it is proper for University authorities to assist the union with guidance and legal advice to ensure that the constitution of such a student union does not contain any provision which constitutes illegality.

13. The Tribunal recommends that :—

The Congress by its function under the students' constitution should be reformed to conform to the Constitution of the country so that its deliberations would be democratic in the following ways :

(i) Before a Congress is called, the University authorities must be informed of its agenda, and the reason why the items on the agenda cannot be dealt with by the Students' Representative Council or Central Executive Council of the students must be indicated ;

(ii) The University authorities could then advise as to what steps to be taken by the students, always bearing in mind the statute of the University and conduct likely to amount to misbehaviour and consequent indiscipline ;

(iii) The University Authorities must be given at least 48 hours notice of the Students' Union intention to summon congress. (Part VI, Chapter 1, 6.8).

*Comment :*

Government accepts these recommendations and commends them to the authorities of the University of Ife in particular and to all other Nigerian Universities in general.

14. The Tribunal recommends that :—

In the interest of the students and the country it is necessary to set up a student's counselling system in the University of Ife since a large majority of the students are teenagers who are granted admission mainly because of their educational qualifications without regard to their ages. (Page 157 (6.10)).

*Comment :*

Government accepts this recommendation and as stated in the comments in paragraph 5 the Universities and in particular the authorities of the University of Ife are required to examine the issue of a minimum age for undergraduate admission.

15. The Tribunal recommends that :—

The recruitment policy of the Police should be based on secondary education where practicable and their training should be greatly supplemented with further and continuing education. (Part VI, Chapter 3, 6.33).

*Comment :*

Government accepts this recommendation.

16. The Tribunal recommends that :—

As a matter of priority, the Federal Government should embark on a gigantic programme of building barracks for the rank and file of the entire Nigeria Police so as to enhance discipline, training and better mobility in times of crisis. (Part VI, Chapter 3, 6.36).

*Comment :*

Government notes this recommendation which conforms with the present Administration's policy and efforts to improve the Nigeria Police Force.

17. The Tribunal recommends that :—

The normal operational equipment, kits and vehicles of the Nigeria Police Force should be modernised to enhance its efficiency. (Part VI, Chapter 3, 6.41).

*Comment :*

Government also notes this recommendation which is in keeping with the present Administration's policy and efforts.

18. The Tribunal recommends that :—

(a) There should be established in each State of the Federation a Police Forensic Laboratory so as to facilitate prompt investigation of crimes ;

(b) Graduates in Chemistry, Physics, Biology and other Scientific disciplines should be recruited into the Police to facilitate (a) above. (Part VII, 7.20).

*Comment :*

Government notes these recommendations.