



Federal Ministry of Justice

FG RESTATES COMMITMENT TO SUSTAIN DECONGESTION OF CORRECTIONAL CENTRES

The Federal Government has restated its commitment to sustaining the decongestion of Correctional Centres adding that, a total of 3,789 inmates have so far been released from the Nigeria Correctional Service Centres across the country during the COVID - 19 pandemic.

The government action it would be recalled was a follow up to its resolve to curb the spread of the deadly corona virus among inmates.



HONOURABLE ATTORNEY- GENERAL OF THE FEDERATION AND MINISTER OF JUSTICE, ABUBAKAR MALAMI, SAN BRIEFING THE PRESS ON THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONAL SERVICE REFORM AND DECONGESTION, HELD ON 7TH JULY, 2020 AT THE MINISTER'S CONFERENCE ROOM.

Making the announcement at a Press Conference on Tuesday July 7, 2020, the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Abubakar Malami, SAN, said the measure was taken to reduce risk of inmates contracting the virus. He said, "As part of measures to decongest the custodial centres nationwide in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the dangers posed to the centres, the HAGF's office, the Ministry of Interior in collaboration with Presidential

Committee on Correctional Service and Decongestion, the Presidential Advisory Committee on Prerogative of Mercy and State Executives and Other relevant stakeholders, were galvanised to develop measures to overcome the challenges.

"The initiatives adopted we have been able to so far led to the release of about 3,789 inmates while simultaneously reducing the instances of

unnecessary test and we intend to sustain this momentum," Malami stated. Giving highlights to celebrate notable achievements of the Presidential Committee on Correctional Service Reform and Decongestion, Malami hinted that the Committee, had since inauguration visited and appraised about 39 prisons in 18 states and has released a total of 7,813 during the visits through advocacy overtures to relevant authorities and collaboration with other stakeholders for the payment of fines for convicts of minor offences with the option of fine who are unable to pay the fine .

"Undoubtedly, the COVID 19 pandemic has posed its own peculiar challenges in light of the worrisome and dilapidated state of our correctional centres nationwide. Without belabouring the facts, it is pertinent to note the inadequacy of our correctional facilities, which are currently operating at more than 150% of their capacity", he expressed.

Malami who informed of FG efforts at ameliorating state of affairs commended the Minister of Interior for the ongoing construction of 3000-capacity maximum security custodial centres in Karshi, Abuja and in Janguza, Kano State. "The Committee is tasked with reviewing the case of awaiting trial inmates generally, which account for above 70% of the population of Custodial Centres, the Committee also conduct special review of cases of inmate awaiting trials for upwards of five years" Malami explained.

HAGF a noted that, "inmates eligible for prerogative of mercy and cases of condemned convicts on death row for over ten (10) years, with the view to getting relevant authorities to commute the sentences to life imprisonment and peculiar cases" Speaking further, Malami highlighted some of the challenges which include;- Limited participation of States on maintenance or upkeep of the Correctional Centres located in their jurisdiction; Arbitrary issuance of remand order by magistrates in spite of the provisions of the Administration of Criminal Justice ACT, 2015; inefficiency in the coordination of Stakeholders in the Criminal Justice System and inadequate of funds. He commended the immeasurable support from all Stakeholders in the Sector, development partners, CSOs

and Private Citizens who share in the vision for an efficient and effective justice system.

In his report, the Chief Judge FCT High Court/Chairman Presidential Committee on Correctional Service Reform and Decongestion, Hon.



HONOURABLE CHIEF JUDGE OF FCT HIGH COURT/CHAIRMAN OF THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONAL SERVICE REFORM AND DECONGESTION HON. JUSTICE ISHAQ BELLO, REAFFIRMING GOVERNMENTS COMMITMENT ON SUSTAINING THE DECONGESTION CORRECTIONAL CENTRE.

Justice Ishaq U. Bello confirmed that during the visits to the Correctional Centres nationwide, the committee carried out inspection exercises where a number of facilities were discovered to be in dire need of urgent rehabilitation and made recommendations to the relevant authorities for the renovation/construction of these facilities. He highlighted that the Committee took a lot of initiatives

at improving the status of Correctional Centres, notable is the upgrading of the Libraries in Custodial Centres. He said, “Let me also mention that I had initiated the upgrading of the libraries in Custodial centres with the aim of aiding the re-orientation of inmates and during our visit to the Uyo correctional centre, we kick-started the project with the donation of carefully selected books to the Akwa Ibom state Command” he pointed. Hon. Bello informed that the committee recommended the establishment of psychiatric clinics and employment of psychotherapists across the custodial centres nationwide. They also suspended the ridiculous practice of charging suspects with non-existent offences by the Judicial and prosecuting officers.

He said in March, 2020, the Committee in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Justice held a retreat in Uyo, Akwa Ibom state and together with relevant stakeholders reviewed the 'first draft' of the proposed Sentencing Guidelines incorporating Non-Custodial Measures for the effective implementation of the Nigerian Correctional Service Act, 2019. Earlier, the Solicitor General and Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Justice, Mr Dayo Apata in his opening remarks commended

President Muhammadu Buhari for his spirited action in addressing heavy risk of the Covid 19 pandemic “the success recorded should encourage the spirited and unrelated efforts of all Stakeholders in the realisation of the dream of the Correctional Service in Nigeria”



HONOURABLE ATTORNEY-GENERAL OF THE FEDERATION AND MINISTER OF JUSTICE IN A GROUP PHOTOGRAPH WITH MEMBERS OF THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMITTEE. ON HIS LEFT, (CC-OPS) OGUEJIOFOR EMMANUEL, SOLICITOR GENERAL OF THE FEDERATION AND PERMAMENT SECRETARY, FEDERAL MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, DAYO APATA, SAN, ROLAC REPRESENTATIVE OLUWATOYIN BADEJOGBIN. ON HIS RIGHT, SENIOR HUMAN RIGHTS ADVISER, MARTIN OKEY EJIDIKE, CHIEF JUDGE, FCT HIGH COURT/CHAIRMAN OF THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONAL SERVICE REFORM AND DECONGESTION, HON. JUSTICE ISHAQ BELLO, DIRECTOR, PUBLIC PROSECUTION OF THE FEDERATION; MR. UMAR ETSU MOHAMMED, SECRETARY TO THE COMMITTEE, MRS LETICIAL AYOOLA - DANIELS.

He also commended the Hon. Justice Ishaq U. Bello for his leadership role that propelled the notable achievements recorded by the Committee. He explained that the financial and passionate support of the HAGF enabled the CJ out of his busy schedule go round the country to ensure that administration of Criminal Justice and the decongestion are implemented.

Also present at the event were representatives of Nigeria Correctional Service, Oguejiofor E.O, ROLAC, Oluwatoyin Badejogbin and UN Senior Human Right Adviser, Martin Ejidike among others.