



NIGERIANS URGED TO SHUN DIVISIVE TENDENCIES IN 2020

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LAGOS, NIGERIA -

Nigerians have been called upon to shun all divisive tendencies that are threatening the unity of the country and embrace all collaborative efforts that will facilitate the development and oneness of the country.

The call was made by the Catholic Archbishop of Lagos, Most Rev. Alfred Adewale Martins in his new year message to all Nigerians; released in Lagos recently through the Archdiocesan Director of Social Communications, Rev. Fr. Anthony Godonu. The Archbishop advocated that all hands must be on deck to build a strong, united, peaceful progressive nation in the year 2020.

He noted the need to forge a more peaceful and united country in the New Year has become much more desirable at this period of our national life, in order to curb the numerous divisive tendencies that have held the country hostage for years and hindered it from attaining real growth and development. Archbishop Martins also challenged the Federal, States and Local Governments to live above board by being sincere in their approach to governance and formulating only policies that would be in the best interests of majority of the citizens.

While expressing satisfaction with the recent release of Omoyele Sowore and Col. Sambo Dasuki (rtd) from the custody of the DSS, Archbishop Martins said that such a gesture should be extended to all detainees who have been

granted bail by the courts. He argued that this would go a long way in changing the perception about the Federal Government in some quarters as undermining the integrity of the courts by flagrant disobedience of court judgements.

The Archbishop declared: "I send my sincere best wishes and prayers to all Nigerians as we enter into a new decade in 2020. We pray that peace and tranquillity will reign in our country. The year 2019 has been one with many challenges. The challenges led to the call for a revolution by Omoyele Sowore. All that happened thereafter are part of our history now. However, we thank God that after so much pressure, the Attorney General of the country finally directed the DSS to release Omoyele Sowore and Sambo Dasuki. That is the way to go!"

He continued: "However, we are aware that there are a number of people, including Sheik El Zakzaky, that are still being detained even after they have been granted bail by the courts. In the spirit of the New Year, which I believe should usher in attitudes of reconciliation, harmony and peace, we appeal to the government of President Buhari to once again take the bold step of instructing the release of all of them. By so doing, government would be sending a strong signal to all and sundry that she is truly committed to the rule of law."

The Archbishop described as sad, unfortunate and barbaric the recent report of the beheading of 11 Christians whom ISWAP had abducted and held captive. While appealing to Christians for restraint in reaction to this provocative action, the Archbishop urged the Federal Government to put more decisive measures in place in order to curb the lingering cases of insecurity in the country in the New Year. He also appealed to well-meaning Muslims to work with Christians and other stakeholder groups in order to stamp out these atrocities carried out in the name of Allah.

Archbishop Martins reiterated his call for peaceful co-existence amongst Christians and Muslims that respects freedom of association and worship in all parts of the country. According to him: "No one has a right to disturb anyone else from worshipping God as they please".

He urged religious leaders to always remind their faithful that Nigeria is a secular State by her Constitution and “they must discourage any fanatic tendencies that lead to religious intolerance and bigotry”. He expressed optimism that this will go a long way to douse the challenges of religious violence in the country.