

ACADEMIC STAFF UNION OF UNIVERSITIES (ASUU)



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Permanent Site
Owagwala, FCT, Abuja

Our Ref: _____ Your Ref: _____ Date: 4th November, 2022

PRESS RELEASE

Gentlemen of the press and members of the public

We bring you fraternal greetings from the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), University of Jos branch. Nigerians will recall that the more than eight months strike embarked upon by our union was suspended on the 14th of October, 2022 after our National Executive Council (NEC) meeting in Abuja. The strike was suspended ostensibly because of the court order that directed our members to resume work because we are a law abiding union and some understanding on some of the contentious issues reached with the leadership of the Federal House of Representatives led by the Rt. Hon Speaker, Mr Femi Gbajabamila.

One of the issues agreed at the meeting was that 50% of the backlog of eight months arrears of our withheld salaries will be paid to our members immediately but as at the time of writing this press release, only 17 days prorated October salary was paid to our members by the office of the Accountant General of the Federation. Having stayed for about nine months running now, our members in the University of Jos considered this an insult to them by the Accountant General of the Federation. Is the Accountant General of the Federation actually answerable to the Minister of Labour? So, if today the Minister of Agriculture directs the Accountant General of the Federation to withhold the salaries of the staff of the Agricultural Research Institutes who have been on strike for over a year, will he obey that? We wonder why Ngige is only keen about withholding the salaries of ASUU members because staff of some Agricultural Research Institutes have been on strike for almost a year but they have been receiving their salaries regularly. Is this policy only for ASUU members?

We are also aware that the Minister of Labour and Employment, Chris Ngige wrote a memo to the Accountant General asking him to pay our members only from the day we suspended the strike against laid down policy. By this singular act, the Minister of Labour and Employment has casualized the work of the University Lecturers unfortunately. This further creates doubts on our minds as to whether the understanding reached with the leadership of the House of Representatives on some of the issues will be implemented at all by those who are saddled with the responsibility of doing so in order to avoid further needless strikes.

From all indications, the Minister of Labour and Employment, Chris Ngige has personalized the matter between him and our union and is on a mission for vendetta. It has become crystal clear now that he wasn't happy that the House of Representatives brokerred a truce on some of the issues we went on strike for and has gone behind to undermine it. It is also very clear to us now why he shamelessly walked out on the leadership of the House of Representatives at one of the meetings with all stakeholders to the glare of all Nigerians because he never wanted any form of resolution to be reached on the issues being discussed and is leaving no stone unturned to frustrate it, even though he piously prides himself as the "chief conciliator of

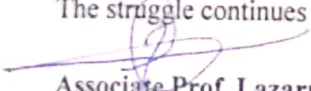
the nation". What manner of conciliator in his/her right senses will walk out of a conciliatory meeting convened by the Legislative Arm because he (Chris Ngige) has failed in his responsibility as the "chief conciliator of the nation". It was he, who directed that some of our members at Usmanu Danfodio University, Sokoto (UDUS) and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa Bauchi (ATBU) be paid eight months withheld salaries which were paid to them earlier this week with the hope of causing confusion among our ranks but has failed dismally. University lecturers are under the direct supervision of the Minister of Education but for some very strange reasons, it was the Minister of labour that wrote to stop our salaries and not the Minister of Education.

Nigerians will also recall that one of the respected Professors, Attahiru Jega, who is former INEC Chairman, former Vice-Chancellor, former ASUU president and current Chairman of the Governing council of University of Jos said that Ngige has personalized the ASUU strike between him and the Minister of Education and ASUU on Arise Television. Rather than work towards resolving the issues in contention, Ngige came out and made uncomplimentary and very disrespectful comments on the revered scholar, administrator and a respected union leader. The action exhibited by Ngige now has justified Prof Jega's remarks on the attitude of the Minister of labour. Like the saying goes, "a leopard cannot hide the colour of its skin". Furthermore, Ngige has justified why he rudely tapped our President on the back and pointed accusing finger at him while walking out of the meeting with the leadership of the House of representatives.

We still remember very well how he (Ngige) went to the Okija shrine, took an oath to protect an interest they collectively agreed with some of his people but turned round and betrayed it. This is what Nigerians are getting from the character of such a person. The Okija shrine posture is what is playing out now and how people with such antecedents have become ministers in Nigeria still remains a difficult question. We wonder who is really in charge of this Country. Has Ngige become the President and Commander in Chief, that his directives to stop our salaries and to pay us prorated salaries are being obeyed? It is now clear that Ngige, the Minister of Finance, and the Accountant General of the Federation all seem to be on the same page.

In view of the bottleneck placed by Ngige towards paying our members the backlog of our salaries, the congress of ASUU University of Jos met today 4th November, 2022 and resolved to stay at home, though not on strike until the backlog of the withheld salaries are paid. For the avoidance of doubt, our members are back to work, willing and ready to work but are unable to work. Based on the revised academic calender for the 2020/2021 session approved by the senate of the Univeristy, lectures should have started already but the challenge of lack of payment of salaries has constrained our members from going to the classroom to teach. What this implies is that the students who have resumed already will have to wait indefinitely while we wait for our withheld salaries to be paid to us, unfortunately.

The struggle continues


Associate Prof. Lazarus L. Maigoro,
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University of Jos