

IAJP STATEMENT ON OPC'S CITIZEN ARREST OF ALLEGED TERRORIST, WAKILI

The International Alliance for Justice and Peace (IAJP) congratulates the men of Oodua People's Congress (OPC) for their exceptional courage matched only by great discipline in their latest intervention in the Ibarapa area of Oyo state. On Saturday, 6th March 2021, the men of OPC effected the arrest of one Wakili, a notorious leader of a violent gang that has unleashed terror on the people of Ibarapa for many months, paralysing economic activities and leaving many residents maimed and dead, and billions of property destroyed in his wake.

The OPC completed this operation without any bloodshed to the alleged gang leader and members, even in the face of utmost provocation in which gang members shot several times at the OPC members. In carrying out this operation with such rare discipline, the OPC has not only inspired hope among the long suffering residents of the beleaguered community, it has also laid down a high standard for cooperation between citizens and police and security forces in the collect effort to tackle the menace of gang violence terrorism across Yorubaland.

Tragically however, we are horrified to hear reports that men of the Nigerian police have arrested four members of the heroic OPC team that commendably and impeccably effected the apprehension of the deadly Wakilu and his men! This alleged act is an outrageous assault on the sensibilities of all men and women of good will, not only across Yorubaland but anywhere in the world! It is an established and acceptable principle of law that citizens have the right to, and are in fact encouraged to apprehend individual or individuals who have committed or are in the process of committing indictable or felonious acts, the likes of those Wakilu and his men have been accused. Citizen arrest, especially when carried out with utmost regards to the requirement of the law as exemplified by the men of the OPC in this present matter, is not only commendable, it is also a charitable community act that should be encouraged.

We call on the police high command to investigate this reported incident, as it undermines the working synergy that should exist between the police and neighbourhoods' security stakeholders. It also validates the perception that the Buhari-led Nigerian security forces are outdoing themselves to confirm long held suspicions that it is complicit in the campaign of terror currently ravaging Yorubaland. If not convincingly rebutted, it would essentially further set a dangerous message that restraint and cooperation with security agencies is not a viable option for law abiding citizens who only want to live their lives in peace.

It is now imperative and urgent for the security forces to correct this impression taking hold among the populace before peoples' minds are closed up on the growing image of security agencies as champions of terror. The minimum action required to address this negative impression is not just to either convincingly rebut the accusation, or mete out the right punitive actions on the officers responsible for this breach of the rules of official engagement, infringement of the fundamental rights of citizens to arrest offenders of the law, and worsening of optics for an already discredited government, but to immediately expedite action on the prosecution of Wakili and his gangs!

Finally, we strongly believe that this well-coordinated engagement that had culminated in this bloodless arrest brings to the fore the need to further legitimise local security initiatives of communities. It reinforces the need to adopt a multi-tier policing system in our national security architecture if we were any determined about restoring our territorial integrity.

Signed

Dr Seun Kolade

On behalf of IAJP, 7th March 2021.

<https://theiajp.org/iajp-statement-on-opcs-citizen-arrest-of-alleged-terrorist-wakili/>