

***Abuja, Nigeria, December 2 (Infosplusgabon) - The Senate Tuesday finally summoned courage to ask President Muhammadu Buhari to sack the country's service chiefs.***

Six months ago, following another round of violence and killings by Boko Haram/Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) terrorists, the Senate had meekly requested the service chiefs to resign voluntarily but they did not heed the call.

The Senate, joining the fray, followed the adoption of a motion sponsored by the former Governor of Borno State, Senator Kashim Shettima (Borno Central).

The resolution came four days after Boko Haram terrorists' gruesome killing of 43 rice farmers in Zabarmari village in Jere Local Government Area of Borno State last Saturday.

Since then, there has been frustrations and outrage across Nigeria on the growing killings, especially by the terrorists.

The same day, a coalition of human rights groups from Northern Nigeria held an emergency meeting in Kaduna, saying President Muhammadu Buhari had no choice but to sack the service chiefs.

Signatories to the statement issued at the end of the meeting include Nastura Ashir Sahriff-Coalition of Northern Group's Board of Trustees Chairman (Kano), National Chairman of the Social Democratic Party, Abdul Ahmed Isiaq (Kaduna), Alhaji Gambo Ibrahim Gugungu, National President of Arewa Youths Forum (Kaduna), Jibril Tafida (Kaduna).

Others included Engineer Bello Bichi (Kano), Murtala Muhammad (Kaduna), Mandir Guruza, Arch. Mathias Joseph (Plateau), Engr. Ibrahim Ndagi (Niger) and Aminu Saleh (Bauchi) as well as Shetima Yerima, leader of the Arewa Youth Consultative Forum.

The five-point statement read: "We say enough is enough of these killings of innocent and unarmed civilians in Borno State, brought about by the seeming inability of the nation's troops stationed in the state to help avoid this kind of massive attacks and killings.

"We categorically call on President Muhammadu Buhari to immediately sack the nation's service chiefs for their inability to save the nation this tragically-embarrassing experience that has dire consequences to our international image.

“It is our conviction that until a major paradigm shift in the security architecture is promptly applied by President Muhammadu Buhari, we will continue with this bad and alarming rounds of the tragic and embarrassing situation.

“There is also the need for not just total overhaul of the security architecture in Borno but also the outdated intelligence-gathering method. The time to end this madness is now, the nation can’t afford to wait any longer.

“We commiserate with the families of the farmers who were killed while trying to legitimately earn a living. Our heartfelt condolences go to the entire people and government of Borno State.”

But the presidency has already poured cold water over the agitations for the sack of the service chiefs as Malam Garba Shehu, Senior Special Assistant on Media and Publicity to President Buhari says the calls are “out of place”.

Shehu, while reacting to the calls on President Buhari to sack the service chiefs over the

continuing slaughter of civilians by Boko Haram/ISWAP terrorists, said Monday night in an interview with Arise TV the decision to sack or retain any of the service chiefs was entirely the president's.

The presidential spokesperson said: "I am not aware that the tenure of service chiefs is subjected to any law or regulation that is clearly stated. They serve at the pleasure of the president and (if) the president is satisfied with their performance, he keeps them. The buck stops on his table —with due respect to the feelings of Nigerians.

"The clamour for the sack is out of place considering that the president is not subject to the opinion of opposition political party which has clamoured for this all the time. It is entirely his own determination; he decides who he keeps as his service chiefs and for how long."

Chief of Defence Staff General Abayomi Olonisakin; Chief of Army Staff Lt. General Tukur Buratai; Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ekwe Ibas; and Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal Sadique Abubakar were appointed in 2015.

In 2018, their tenure was extended.

Part 1, Section 11.08 of the “Revised Harmonised Armed Forces of Nigeria’s Terms and Conditions of Service 2017 (HTACOS)” states that “An officer appointed the Chief of Defence Staff, Chief of Army Staff, Chief of Naval Staff and Chief of Air Staff shall be a four-star general and may hold the appointment for a continuous period of two years.

“The C-in-C may extend such an appointment for another period of two years from the date of expiration of the initial two-year period.”

Section 11.09 of the document states that “the foregoing notwithstanding, the President/C-in-C reserves the prerogative to extend the tenure of a CDS/Service Chief irrespective of his age or length of service.”

The HTACOS states on page 38 that “notwithstanding, the provisions of paragraphs 11.01 and 11.02 above, no commissioned officer shall be called upon to retire, relinquish or resign his commission or transfer to the reserve, nor shall pressure be exerted on him to do so except by the authority of the appropriate Service Council/Board”.

Section 11.07 of HTACOS states: “Where an officer has objection on being called upon to retire or resign, he may seek redress up to the highest possible level.”

Paragraph 11.09 affirms that “the foregoing notwithstanding, the President, C-in-C reserves the prerogative to extend the tenure of a CDS/Service Chief irrespective of his age or length of service. Paragraph 11.10 states that “a career in the Armed Forces of Nigeria is a primary one since the Services require only able-bodied persons. It follows then that quite a number of officers are bound to retire when they can still be usefully engaged in other professions outside the military.”

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