



FEDERAL MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
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OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR (PRESS & PR)
PRESS RELEASE

**OVERBEARING POSTURE RESPONSIBLE FOR BABALAKIN'S
REMOVAL - FG**

After weeks of media hostilities over another contrived crisis in the University of Lagos, the Federal Government has maintained that embattled former Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Governing Council of that University, Dr. Bolanle Olawale Babalakin, SAN, Was Not Exonerated by the General Martin Luther Agwai-led Regular Visitation Panel to the University. Following his indictment for breach of due process and flagrant disregard for the University Laws in the aborted removal of the Vice Chancellor and unilateral appointment of an Acting Vice Chancellor, the Special Presidential Visitation Panel and the White Paper thereof, recommended and approved respectively his removal from office and dissolution of the Governing Council.

In an interview with media correspondents in Abuja, the Director Press and Public Relations in the Ministry, Ben. Bem Goong, said the former Pro-Chancellor remains indicted and removed from office and that the Senior Advocate had accepted his guilt by resigning hours before the release of the White Paper that came out of the Special Presidential Visitation Panel, adding that the hostility towards the Permanent Secretary for doing his job is unnecessary and unjustifiable.

While condemning the campaign of calumny as a desperate attempt to distract and slow down the rising profile of the university, the Director Press said facts on ground speak to the contrary.

Quoting from sections of the Federal Government's White Paper on the Report of the Special Visitation Panel to the University of Lagos, (Which the Director Media made available to the Press) Goong said:

“The steps taken by Council in the removal of the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Oluwatoyin Ogundipe were fraught with irregularities and did not follow due process, therefore, the removal of the Vice Chancellor should be reversed and Prof. Oluwatoyin Ogundipe be reinstated as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lagos to continue his tenure.

Government's decision; Government accepts this recommendation.”

Similarly, Goong quoted the White Paper as saying:

“Council as presently constituted (as it was then constituted under Babalakin emphasis- mine), shows scant understanding of the law within which they are to give policy direction to the University. Interaction between the Panel and critical stakeholders in the University shows the Pro-Chancellor is overbearing in his handling of the Council's affairs. The relationship between Council and Management has broken down and Council should be dissolved to move the University forward.”

Government's Decision; Government accepts this recommendation.”

Furthermore, the White Paper said:

"The Pro-Chancellor has an overbearing personality that is not amenable to cordial working relationship with the majority of Council Members and the University Management. This has led to a situation where he is synonymous with Council and the opinion of other Council Members did not matter. The Panel's interaction with him did not show a shift in his attitude. His leadership style has led to the polarization of the Council largely along internal and external Council Membership lines. The situation which is inimical to a healthy environment for the conduct of the business of Council culminated into the crisis that engulfed the University."

The Panel therefore recommended that:

“The Pro-Chancellor should be removed as Council Chairman and the Council dissolved.”

Government's decision; Government accepts this recommendation.”

Asked to clarify whether the second (Regular) Visitation Panel has exonerated Babalakin from the indictment of the Special Visitation Panel, Goong had this to say:

"It is embarrassing for a lawyer of Babalakin's standing, a SAN for that matter to say that a Regular Visitation Panel has exonerated him from the indictment of an earlier Visitation Panel on three grounds"

First, the Regular Visitation Panel was not, is not, and cannot be an appellate body for the Special Visitation Panel. Administratively, Government's decisions on the recommendations of the Panel as captured in the White Paper of the Special Visitation Panel brought closure to the sad episode.

The issues for determination before the two Panels are completely different, thus; the Special Visitation Panel was to determine whether due process was followed in the removal of the Vice Chancellor or not. The verdict was clear; due process was not followed. The Panel had this to say about the appointment of an Acting Vice Chancellor "It is abundantly clear from the provisions of the law that Council has no powers to unilaterally appoint the Acting Vice Chancellor without the input of Senate as it did in the meeting of 12th of August, 2020. The process adopted by the Council in the appointment of Prof. Omololu Soyombo as Acting Vice-Chancellor of the University was inconsistent with the clear and unassailable provisions of the Law relating to the appointment of an Acting Vice-Chancellor. Similarly, it was established that Professor Ogundipe was not afforded an opportunity to defend himself as provided in the laws of the university.

Thirdly, on Babalakin's self-declared "exoneration by the Regular Presidential Visitation Panel, it is the most ridiculous proclamation in the circumstance. More disturbing is the claim of obtaining from the Ministry, a non-existent Report or at best a forged one with no relationship whatsoever with the authentic one and promoting same in the media; knowing that it is fake and the truth will eventually come to light.

The report of the Regular Visitation Panel has just been submitted to the Minister of Education, Adamu Adamu. The next stage is to set up a White Paper Committee which will review the report and make recommendations to Government. Running ahead of the White Paper to undermine its integrity smacks of a vendetta against Government over his self-inflicted woes.

As it stands, neither the Vice Chancellor nor anyone for that matter can be said to be indicted or exonerated by the Regular Visitation Panel (General Martin Agwai-led panel) until a White Paper is released.

The only relationship between the two Visitation Panels (Special and Regular) is that following additional allegations against the Vice Chancellor by the Pro Chancellor after the purported removal, the White Paper directed that "Having found that the Vice-Chancellor was removed based on the Dagari Committee's

Report which did not accord fair hearing to the Vice-Chancellor, the Panel recommends that the Vice Chancellor be reinstated to continue with his tenure.

Government's decision; Government accepts this recommendation and directs that all allegations against the Vice Chancellor and Management of the University be referred to the regular Visitation Panel for investigation and necessary recommendations”.

The general public and especially the former Pro Chancellor is advised to wait for the White Paper Committee (which is yet to be set-up) on the Regular Visitation Panel report to come out with its recommendations, and Government takes its decisions, before laying claims to vindication (if applicable) and not exoneration. To do so before then amounts to jumping the gun. There are 88 Reports for universities, polytechnics and colleges of education, why all the noise about only one institution?

We also notice some desperation following the Permanent Secretary's only intervention in the matter. To fabricate stories about different versions of positions and publishing same to deceive unsuspecting readers is vile and wicked. Facts are sacred and the clarification was captured on tape. They should produce evidence of their multiple claims (when and to whom?).

The Ministry will remain focused and not respond to this matter again. This is our last line on an odious era. We wish the new Governing Council success in steering the affairs of the university.

Ben. Bem Goong

Director, Press and Public Relations

30th September, 2021