NEWS

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AC canvasses good governance to stop pipeline tragedies

A CALL has gone to the President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua administration to urgently address the widespread poverty in the country as a way to check incessant pipeline vandalisation and its attendant tragedies.

The call was made yesterday by the Action Congress (AC) in response to Christmas day's pipeline fire which claimed about 40 lives in Ikate, Lagos.

In a statement issued in Abuja yesterday by its National Publicity Secretary, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, the

party expressed sympathy with the families of the victims, many of whom are said to be women and

children, as well as the entire nation.

The AC said it is high time the Federal Government got to the root cause of why people have become so desperate that they will willingly risk fiery death.

"We must say, unequivocally that nothing, absolutely nothing, justifies the recurring, willful damaging of

fuel pipelines by vandals for whatever reason. This is totally unacceptable.

"But we must also point out that such despicable acts were rare in the country in the past. The question

then is: what has driven our people to such a point that they will go like sheep to the slaughter, in the name of scooping fuel anytime they get news of a damaged fuel pipeline?

"The answer is simple: People have been driven into a state of hopelessness by the anti-people policies of the government, especially the immediate past administration of Olusegun Obasanjo", AC said.

The party noted that in 2006, two major fuel pipeline fires claimed over 300 lives in Lagos alone while thousands others have been incinerated across the country, including the 1998 tragedy at Jesse

Village which claimed over 1,000 lives.

"After the last tragedy at Abule Egba last year, we warned that the scale of the incessant tragedies had

reached a level where the government had to go beyond issuing empty threats to fashioning out policies that

would bring people back from the abyss of poverty and the brink of hopelessness.

"No amount of security cordon can protect all the thousands of kilometres of fuel/oil pipeline criss-crossing the country. Even some unscrupulous

security and Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) officials are part of the pipeline

breaking/fuel scooping racket. The only antidote, therefore, is to make life worth living for Nigerians

once again.

"It is futile reading the Riot Act to a hungry man, who will rather choose the devil's alternative of dying in an inferno instead of slowly dying of hunger. And if a man is

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no longer afraid to lose his life, then something has snapped in him", AC said.

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