

METRO PLUS

Unpaid pensions: Protest over retired headmaster's suicide

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• The protesters Photo: Femi Makinde

Femi Makinde, Osogbo

Osun State pensioners operating on the platform of 2011/2012 Forum of Retired Public Servants in Osun State on Wednesday took to the streets to protest against the non-payment of their pensions for over 13 months.

The protesters displayed placards with various inscriptions as they marched from Ayetoro Junction to the popular Olaiya Junction.

Leaders of the group said the protest was fuelled by the increasing death rate among members.

Government was sick and could not take care of himself, his wife and a child, who were all sick at the same time.

One of the leaders of pensioner group, Mr. Yemi Lawal, told our correspondent that Odewole, who retired from Young Tajudeen Primary School in Masifa, decided to take his life because of financial hardship.

Lawal, who blamed the suicide on non-payment of pension for 13 months by the Osun State Government, added that over 2,500 pensioners had died since 2013.

He called on President Muhammadu Buhari to intervene so that pensioners would be paid.

He said, “ We are appealing to President Buhari to save us from Aregbesola. Buhari is the only one who can save us from hunger and untimely death. We are being owed pension arrears of over 13 months.

“We have lost over 2,500 since 2013 and one of our members in Ejigbo last month committed suicide because of financial hardship.

“We want the Federal Government to conduct workers and pensioners audit to know the exact number of pensioners and workers. We are also pleading with the President not to pay any intervention fund meant for salary and pension to the Osun State Government because the money will be diverted just like the previous funds were diverted.”

The Secretary of the Forum, Mr. Sola Olojede, who also spoke to our correspondent, added that the retired headmaster committed suicide on September 29 at Masifa in Ejigbo because of financial hardship.

He said, “There are so many of our people, who are sick and cannot go to the hospital because they don’t have money even to eat. We have worked for the state and the state should pay us our entitlements.”

But the Commissioner for Information, Mr. Adelani Baderinwa, described the group of pensioners as politicians, who were blackmailing the governor.

pensioners based on the modulated payment scheme, as the pensioners have alleged.

“We wish to put it on record that (Governor Rauf) Aregbesola increased the amount being paid as pension by 500 per cent in 2011. The non-payment of gratuity is not peculiar to Osun State; and the government has shown its readiness to pay the gratuity as soon as the state finances improve.

“It is on record that this group of pensioners had, at one time or the other in the past, lied against the Osun State Government.

“In a civilised environment and without motives other than pension matters, the so-called 2011/2012 pensioners forum would have buried their heads in shame and exercise decorum expected of senior citizens, instead of making unfounded allegations.”

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