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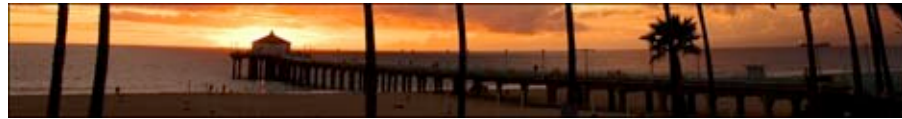
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**Nigeria: Benue Killing - ACN Petitions Jonathan**

By Ike Abonyi, Imam Imam in Lagos and George Okoh in Makurdi

16 May 2011

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Abuja — Following Friday's murder of Charles Ayede, a key member of the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN) in Benue state, the party on Sunday urged President Goodluck Jonathan to move quickly to stop what it called the ongoing systematic annihilation of the party's members and supporters in Benue and other states.

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In a statement issued on Sunday by its National Publicity Secretary, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, the party warned that it will not stand by and allow the killings to degenerate to genocide against people whose only offence seems to be that they are members of the ACN.

It said if President Jonathan is sincere about his much-quoted statement, that the political ambition of anyone is not worth the blood of any Nigerian, then he should step up to the plate today by taking measures to end such killings, even when the elections have ended.

"This is the time to tackle this issue, not when those being targeted decide to fight back and things get out of hand, and the government then resorts to setting up a panel to find the cause, as it happened after the post-election violence in several northern states," ACN said.

The party said Ayede's gruesome murder falls into a pattern of threats and attacks against ACN members in Benue, and that it is part of a campaign aimed at frustrating the party's decision to challenge the election of Gov. Gabriel Suswan at the Tribunal. Reacting in a statement made available to THISDAY and signed by Suswan's Special Adviser on Media, Cletus Akwaya, the governor said as a responsible leader, he is pained that the life of a Benue indigene has terminated in such a tragic circumstance." Suswan said statements by ACN leaders in the state linking his administration to the incident was unfortunate, adding that he would never sanction unlawful termination of the valued life of any person under any circumstance.

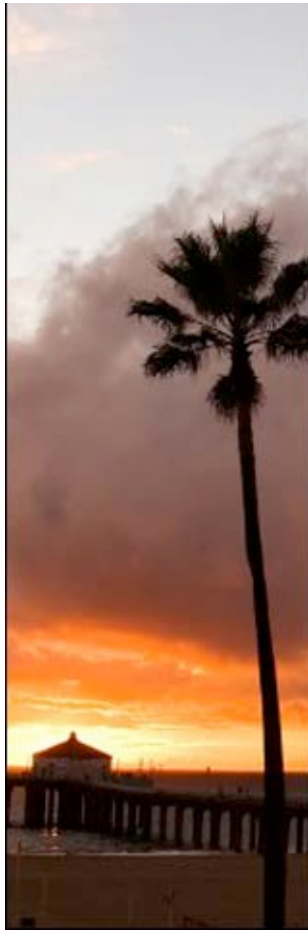
He said it is "highly mischievous and unacceptable, the politicisation of this incident by the ACN in Benue State especially, its defeated governorship candidate in the recently concluded governorship election, Prof Steve Torkuma Ugbah.

He said certain statements credited to Ugbah with regards to Ayede's death are aimed at inciting the public and causing disaffection and confusion among the peace-loving people of the State.



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"The steps taken by the ACN and its leaders in the aftermath of this incident are in clear violation of the laws of the land which require that such serious crime be reported to the police. The attempt to cover up this incident and destroy the evidence raises the question of conspiracy within the ranks of ACN itself. For Prof Ugbah to jump to the hasty and

unreasonable conclusion that Governor Suswam should be held responsible for the attack is the height of mischief," the statement added.

"The politicisation of this sad incidence is consistent with the propaganda war which has been unleashed on Benue people in the last five months by the ACN. This propaganda must have an end in the interest of the peace and development of our dear State. The ACN must end its propaganda war now," the statement added.

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