

Nigerians at war with Embassy: Protest against Ambassador Abubakar in Berlin



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” calls on the government to recall the ambassador Abubakar gets louder”

Nigerians living in Germany have been complaining about the poor service delivery of their Embassy for a long time. Now they have taken the bull by the horns: they will hold a public protest in front of the chancery in Berlin on 14 June.

“Nigerians living in Germany have kept quiet for so long and as a result our embassy officials believe it is their right to exploit and treat us the way they like,” said a statement issued by Concerned Nigerians Germany (CNG), organisers of the protest.

The CNG said their action was motivated by the desire to publicly express the displeasure of the Nigerian community on specific issues such as the mobile consular hearing carried out by the Nigerian Embassy to facilitate the deportation of Nigerians (see page 36 of the current African Courier Magazine for the full story); difficulties with the online payment method for consular services; the unfriendly attitude of the embassy staff towards Nigerians; and the “divide and rule tactics employed by Ambassador Abdu Usman Abubakar”.

The protest is also against what the group describes as the high state of corruption in Nigeria and the state of insecurity in the country, especially as a result of the activities of the Boko Haram terrorists.

The protest is coming after a similar action was held in front of the Nigerian embassy on 10 May by The Voice Refugee Forum, The Caravan for the Rights of Refugees and Migrants and other migrants groups against the collaboration of embassy officials with German authorities in the deportation of Nigerians.

The alleged refusal of Ambassador Abubakar to allow President Jonathan to meet Nigerians during his visit to Germany on 18-20 April was the final push for action, say observers. In the past a community reception was usually organised for a visiting President to meet his countrymen and women and interact with them. For undisclosed reasons, the embassy under the leadership of Abubakar did not organise any events to which Nigerians living in Germany were invited during Jonathan's visit. In fact, representatives of community associations say they were not even properly informed of the presidential visit.



The action of the ambassador has led to accusations of hostility to the president and total disrespect towards the Nigerian community, which has resulted in a heated debate over the suitability of Abubakar for his position. There have been calls on the government to recall the ambassador.

Commenting on the issue, Engr Sebastian Udejah, chairman of the Nigerians in Diaspora Organisation Germany, said: "It was an unprecedented error of judgment that the respected Chancery did not agree with me over the exigency of the situation, namely: our President was visiting this country for the first time since his election and therefore Nigerians must be part of the programme, in good numbers and in an interactive set-up."

Since Abubakar's assumption of office last year, he is said to have refused most requests by community associations to pay him official visits for the purpose of making their views known to him on matters affecting Nigerians in this country.



Demonstrations at the embassy on the 14th June. Pix African Heritage

The ambassador's closed-door policy is said to have alienated him from the community, fuelling misunderstanding between the embassy and Nigerians. A contributor to an online debate on the issue said Abubakar's action is not in sync with the policy of the Jonathan Government, which recognises the important role played by the Nigerian Diaspora in the country's development. Nigerians abroad send more than 10 billion US dollars home annually, the second highest foreign exchange source for the country after oil and gas exports. "Obviously, Abubakar does not recognise us because most of us here are from the southern part while he is from the North," he added. "I see the ambassador's attitude as a reflection of the sentiments associated with the ethno-religious divide in our politics."