



KOGI NGOs NETWORK

{ K O N G O N E T }

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THE KOGI STATE GOVERNMENT VS OBAJANA CEMENT COMPANY; Need for Cooler Heads to Prevail

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Gentleman of the press;

Kogi NGO Network (KONGONET) is the apex coalition of Civil Society Network in Kogi State Championing the promotion of participatory democracy, good governance/best practices, transparent governance and network coordination in Kogi State through advocacy and policy influencing for the well-being of Kogites.

The recent happenings in the Obajana Cement Company have left many stakeholders and citizens perplex at the behaviour of both parties in the avoidable crisis that is threatening to destroy not only the economy of the host communities but the environment of the State. Citizens of Obajana and Lokoja in general have severally cried out to Kogi State Government to come to their aid in checking the excesses of the company especially in the area of environmental pollution and destruction of their economy. The company had behaved as if it was above the law and was not part of a system from which it derived its profits.

The constant dumping of toxic limestone dust into the air and its attendant hazard has over the years brought severe respiratory challenges to those within the immediate surrounding of the plant. The number of cases especially among children has risen and there was no significant effort at arresting the situation and holding the company liable for this damage.

Obajana community together with Lokoja Local Government in particular and Kogi State in general, cannot show benefit from having the company situated in their domain. All economic benefits from the cement factory (employment, value chain, and proportionate taxes) do not come to the host community and the State. It is not possible that such an investment exists in other region of the Country in Nigeria and the major beneficiaries come from outside the domain. This is not a good business practice and will only bring about anger and frustration from both the State and the host communities.

The attitude of disrespect to constituted authorities by the Dangote Industries Limited (DIL) is unacceptable and should be called to order. There is no reason for an investment entity not to respond to a constitutional arm of government whenever called to do so. The attitude of Dangote Industries Limited towards the Kogi State House of Assembly is condemnable and wrong.

It is however unacceptable for the State, in trying to rectify the challenge, to resort to self-help. We are a people of law and order, and the State that represent the people, do so by law. The forceful closure of the company must have legal backing and should have been through the courts of competent jurisdiction.

We call on both parties in this debacle to immediately go to arbitration as enshrined in clause 22 of the original agreement document between Kogi State Government and Dangote Industries Limited (DIL), 2002 and refrain from causing more harm to the citizens of these communities and the State, who have suffered severally due to the actions or inaction of both the Company and the Government.

The Civil Society in Kogi State is willing and planning a tripartite meeting between the parties to find amicable solutions to this ugly situation.

The atmosphere is tense and both parties are becoming unnecessarily too desperate, this could be observed clearly from the press statement made available by the Kogi State Government through her commissioner for information and communication regarding a plot to cause chaos in Kogi State by Dangote Industries Limited. Most recently, our attention was drawn to a press release by a group with no presence in the state called ***“The Coalition For Civil Society Groups”*** who did a hatchet job of speaking for host community of Obajana cement company without proper information of what citizens are faced with as a result of Dangote Industries Limited activities across the state without proper remediation plans. Our preliminary findings shows that the Kogi State House of Assembly is requesting Dangote Industries Limited (DIL) to make available a document purportedly transferring the Obajana Cement Company 100% to Dangote Industries Limited (DIL) and supporting evidence of financial consideration not a case of Cooperate Social Responsibility (CSR) narrative as being pushed by lots.

Our people deserve peace, development and happiness. As it stands today the Obajana Cement Company has become a source of pain, misery and poverty to Kogi State. This cannot continue however; issues must be resolved amicably through the right channels (Law of the Land).

In conclusion:

Kogi NGOs Network (KONGONET) has set up a committee within her ranks of thematic networks to review the ongoing feud between the Kogi State Government and Dangote Industries Limited in a view to provide more information to guide the coalition engagement with both parties, KONGONET will consistently engage government, business communities and other stakeholders for the sole benefit of Kogites and peaceful co-existence.

God Bless Kogi State.

Amb. Idris Ozovehe Muraina

Chairperson, KONGONET

The Executive Director of

Renaissance Care and Empowerment Foundation (RECEF)

Mr. Success Adejoh

PRO, KONGONET

The Coordinator of

Justice, Development and Peace
Commission (JDPC), Lokoja