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#### **OLIVE & MARCH**

The Daily Circular is a Nigerian online publication that goes behind, beneath, and beyond the news – delivering content that truly counts.

[oliveandmarch@wowemedia.ng](mailto:oliveandmarch@wowemedia.ng)

### ABOUT THE DAILY CIRCULAR



Olive & March, a WoweMedia company, is an Abuja-based strategic communications agency serving the public sector.

[editor@thedailycircular.ng](mailto:editor@thedailycircular.ng)

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# From the Editor

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The two decades and seven years since Nigeria returned to democracy have been a testament to a people's determination to pilot their affairs and chart a new course out of a post-independence life packed with political and economic drama.

1999 signalled a departure from an era of dictatorship marked by gross violations of human rights, wanton corruption and maladministration, and international isolation. Ours was a country hungry for democratic governance anchored on citizens' participation, the rule of law and public accountability. The jury remains out on exactly how much has been accomplished in this regard.

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What we can say with boldness is this: The destiny of Africa's most populous nation is now being shaped not just by the actions of the elected but also by the will of the electorate. The people, by virtue of the power democracy bestows on them, have set the pace of Nigeria's greatness and the trajectory of its development, particularly in the last quarter-century.

Built upon the sweat and blood of the heroes of the struggle for democracy, particularly the late Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola, GCFR, winner of the June 12, 1993 presidential election - described as the freest and fairest in our history - and others who paid the supreme price, the Nigeria of today is the creation of the people—young and old, male and female—who vote, who serve, who complain, and who hope, pressing forward against countless odds.

Nigeria's democratic journey in this Fourth Republic has not been without its trials and challenges, missteps and setbacks. But it has also recorded triumphs and milestones, successes and legacies. We must seek out both, and not fall for the temptation of dwelling only on what has failed to materialise.

If you look closely enough, you will see the institutions that are getting stronger, and the citizens' voices getting bolder. As in the rest of the world, social media and the internet have played a significant role in this regard, and deserve to be celebrated.

We have put together this publication, "WE THE PEOPLE", for the 27th Democracy Day Anniversary to chronicle the notable, far-reaching developments, and the contributions of individuals and collectives whose impact has left footprints on the sands of time of Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

Government of the people, by the people and for the people.

Happy Democracy Day, Nigeria!





# The Presidents

# Olusegun Obasanjo



Two-term civilian president (1999-2007); Olusegun Obasanjo became the first African military head of state to hand power over to a democratically elected government in 1979, ushering in Nigeria's Second Republic. He returned two decades later as civilian president, anchoring Nigeria's fragile transition after 16 years of military rule.

His administration's economic reform team, led by Finance Minister Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, helped secure the cancellation of \$18 billion of Nigeria's foreign debt, while improved macroeconomic policies reduced inflation from 17.9% in 2005 to 5.4% in 2007. He established key anti-corruption institutions including the EFCC, deregulated the telecommunications sector, and led Nigeria to play an active role in prominent initiatives aimed at improving security, governance, and development across Africa.

*"The incursion of the military into government has been a disaster for our country and for the military over the last thirty years."*

*- May 29, 1999*

His legacy is tempered by his apparent support for a constitutional amendment that would have enabled him to seek a third term despite widespread public disapproval, though he ultimately stepped down, preserving the constitutional order he had helped restore.

# Umaru Musa Yar'Adua



President (2007-2010); Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's inauguration marked the first time in Nigeria's history that an elected civilian head of state transferred power to another, giving Nigeria's Fourth Republic a crucial precedent of civilian-to-civilian succession.

Known for his personal humility and commitment to the rule of law, he was the first Nigerian president to publicly acknowledge the flaws of his own election and established the Uwais Committee, whose recommendations reshaped INEC and laid the groundwork for more credible elections. He launched his Seven-Point Agenda addressing energy, infrastructure, education, healthcare, security, land reform, and wealth creation, and established an Amnesty Program for Niger Delta militants that helped reduce violence and restore oil production.

*"No matter what obstacles confront us, I have confidence and faith in our ability to overcome them. After all, we are Nigerians! We are a resourceful and enterprising people, and we have it within us to make our country a better place."  
- May 29, 2007*

Although his presidency was cut short by health challenges, his legacy as a humble and principled leader endured, and the tumultuous constitutional transfer of power to his Vice President during the period of his ill-health will never be forgotten.

# Goodluck Jonathan

President (2010-2015); Goodluck Jonathan rose unexpectedly to the presidency following Yar'Adua's death, yet went on to make the single most consequential democratic gesture in Nigeria's postcolonial history.

As president, he signed the Freedom of Information Act and oversaw significant GDP growth. His administration strengthened INEC through biometric voter registration and the introduction of the Permanent Voter Card system, reforms that directly enabled the historic 2015 elections. When the votes were counted in March 2015, Jonathan conceded defeat to Muhammadu Buhari, asserting that "nobody's ambition is worth the blood of any Nigerian". This was an unprecedented and courageous act in Nigerian politics



*"Nigeria is not just a land of promise; it shall be a nation where positive change will continue to take place, for the good of our people. The time for lamentation is over. This is the era of transformation. This is the time for action."*  
- May 29, 2011

His 2015 decision stands as a reminder that true leadership is not about holding on to power, and through his Goodluck Jonathan Foundation and the West African Elders Forum, he continues to advocate for peaceful elections and good governance across the continent.

# Muhammadu Buhari



President (2015-2023); Muhammadu Buhari's democratic journey is one of Africa's most remarkable, a former military dictator who reinvented himself through repeated, patient democratic participation before finally succeeding at the fourth attempt.

His 2015 victory marked the first peaceful transfer of power from one ruling party to an opposition party in Nigerian history, a watershed moment for democratic consolidation. In office, he maintained a modest personal lifestyle, upheld electoral transitions, left tangible infrastructural footprints in rail and road transportation, focused on agriculture and social investment programs, and pursued foundational efforts in transparency and anti-corruption.

He passed away at a clinic in London, two years after leaving office, on July 13, 2025, at the age of 82, leaving behind a legacy built on integrity, service and patriotism.

*"We as Nigerians must remind ourselves that we are heirs to great civilizations: Shehu Othman Dan fodio's caliphate, the Kanem Borno Empire, the Oyo Empire, the Benin Empire and King Jaja's formidable domain. The blood of those great ancestors flows in our veins. What is now required is to build on these legacies, to modernize and uplift Nigeria."*

*- May 29, 2015*

# Bola Ahmed Tinubu

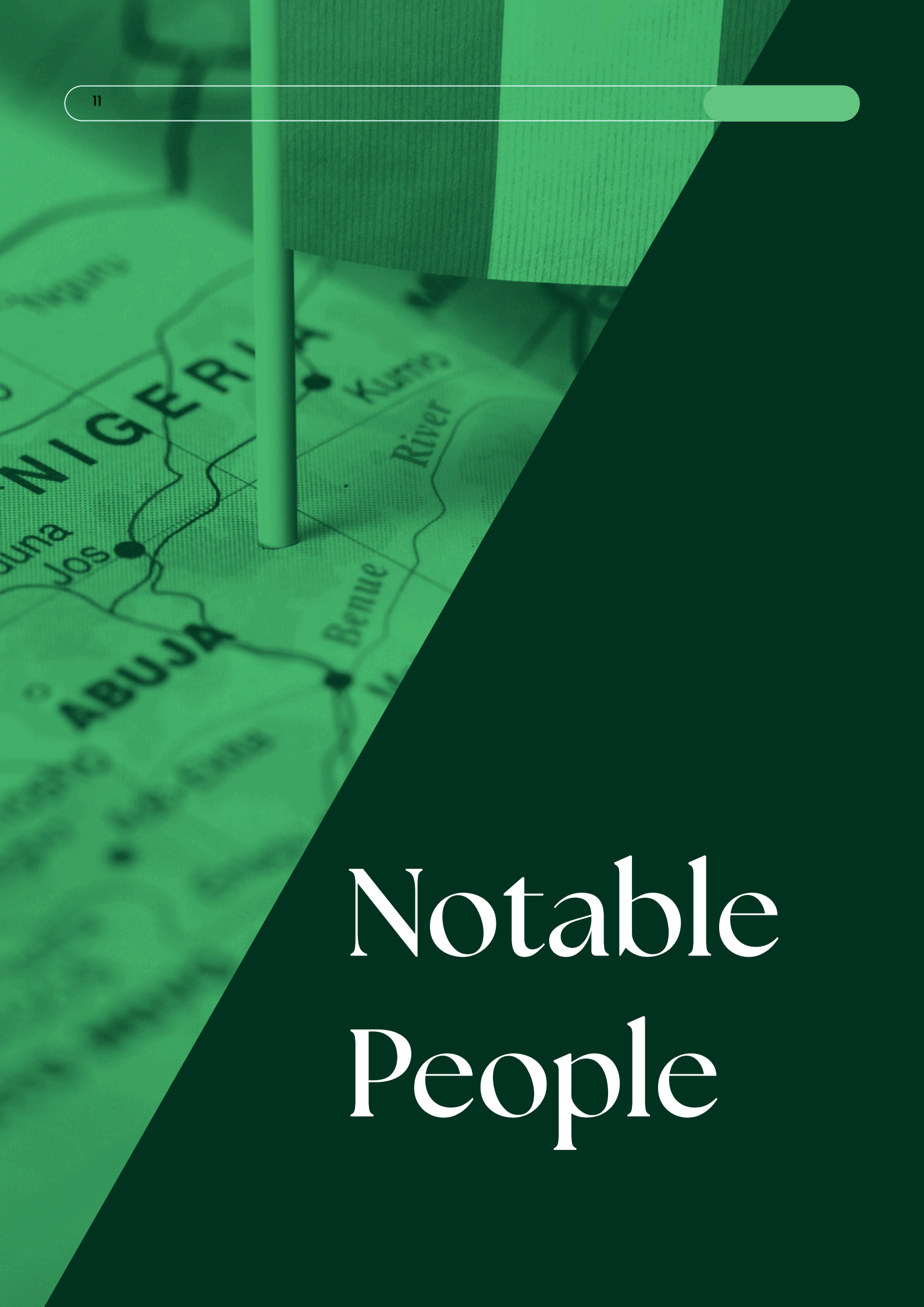
Lagos State Governor (1999-2007) and political strategist who built the APC coalition; elected President in 2023. Following the annulment of the June 12, 1993 elections, Tinubu became a founding member of the pro-democracy NADECO coalition, and under Sani Abacha faced numerous arrests, detentions, and threats to his life, forcing him into exile.

Returning after Abacha's death, he served two terms as Governor of Lagos, transforming it into a financial powerhouse through fiscal discipline and infrastructure investment. His efforts culminated in the formation of the APC in 2013, and as its national leader he was instrumental in crafting the alliance that led to Buhari's historic 2015 victory, the first time an opposition party unseated an incumbent government in Nigeria.



*"We have stumbled at times, but our resilience and diversity have kept us going. Our burdens may make us bend at times, but they shall never break us. Instead, we stand forth as Africa's most populous nation and as the best hope and strongest champion of the Black Race."  
- May 29, 2023*

In just three years of his presidency, he has introduced what many regard as an unprecedented set of reforms in the history of Nigeria across critical sectors of national life: fuel subsidy removal, unification of the forex market, new tax regime, local government autonomy, student loan initiative, and regional development.



# Notable People



## Late Chief Bola Ige, SAN

A leader and 1999 presidential aspirant of the Alliance for Democracy who accepted to serve under the PDP government of Olusegun Obasanjo as the Minister of Power, Justice and Attorney General of the Federation. Though assassinated in December 2001, he is remembered for his intellectual brilliance and oratory prowess, and his murder, still unresolved till date, remains an open wound in Nigeria's democratic conscience.



## Afenifere Group

Foremost and oldest socio-political organization advancing interests of the Yoruba nation and the restructuring of Nigeria. Prominently serving as the mouthpiece of the people of the Southwest geo-political zone and taking position on national issues, the organization, which was created in 1951, has remained steadfast in its advocacy for true federalism as guiding principle for Nigeria's democratic governance.



## Dame Virginia Ngozi Etiaba

Nigeria's first and only female governor, who assumed office following the impeachment of her principal, Governor Peter Obi, by the Anambra State House of Assembly in November 2006 on allegations of gross misconduct. Her historic, ceiling-shattering ascension from Deputy Governor to Governor and time in office was short-lived, lasting just three months, when the Court of Appeal nullified Obi's impeachment in February 2007.



## Dame Pauline Tallen

Appointed Minister of State, Science and Technology in 1999, Deputy Governor of Plateau State in 2007, Minister of Women Affairs in 2019, she is one of Nigeria's most accomplished female public officers, spanning multiple administrations. She contested against her principal, Governor Jonah Jang, without resigning, in the 2011 governorship election under the Labour Party, in which she emerged as the first runner-up. She would also be remembered for turning down an ambassadorial nomination by President Muhammadu Buhari in 2016, citing inequitable distribution of federal appointments among the three senatorial districts of Plateau State.



## Adams Oshiomhole

Labour leader turned politician, he rose to national prominence during his reign as the National Chairman of the Nigeria Labour Congress through his relentless confrontations with the Obasanjo administration over wage negotiation and improved workers' welfare. He translated the goodwill for electoral mandate and emerged Edo Governor between 2008 and 2016. He led the All Progressives Congress' as National Chairman between 2018 and 2020 and currently one of the most vocal senators in the 10th National Assembly.



## Atiku Abubakar

Nigeria's most persistent presidential aspirant, currently running to become President in 2027—his sixth attempt since 1999 and seventh attempt overall. The former Vice President fell out with his principal, President Olusegun Obasanjo, at the tail end of their administration, over political disagreements, particularly Obasanjo's third term agenda, leaving his political brand shadowed with corruption allegations by his boss, a weapon his opposition never fail to deploy at the slightest opportunity, and a stain several attempts at whitewashing have proven unable to remove.



## Bukola Saraki

Against all odds and defying the decision of his party, he emerged the President of the Senate of the 8th Assembly, through a cross-party partisan alliance that also produced a member of the opposition as his deputy. His leadership will be remembered for asserting legislative independence, resisting executive interference in the business of the Parliament.



## Arewa Consultative Forum

Founded in 2000, the forum has been at the forefront of promoting the political interests of Northern Nigeria. Notable positions the group has taken on national issues include resisting the third term agenda of President Obasanjo, opposing the reelection of President Jonathan and endorsing the candidacy of Muhammadu Buhari in 2019 and 2023.



## Gani Fawehinmi

Popularly called the Senior Advocate of the Masses, the fearless human rights activist is a champion of democracy, whose legal advocacy expanded the political space for new political parties to emerge and strive, and safeguarded democratic participation. Even after his death, his legacies continue to inspire the new generation of lawyers and activists.



## David Mark

Military Governor turned senator. Spent 20 years in the Nigerian Senate, out of which, he served as the Senate President for 8 years and remains the longest serving President of the Red Chamber till date. His tenure would be remembered for invoking the Doctrine of Necessity during the 2010 constitutional crisis following the failure of the then ailing President Musa Yar'adua to transfer power to his Vice. He currently chairs the African Democratic Congress, an opposition coalition party gunning to unseat the current President.



## Nyesom Wike

Rose from Local Government Chairman to become one of Nigeria's most prominent, loud-mouthed political godfathers, who has shown a capacity to influence elections beyond his state. His decision to openly support the All Progressives Congress' presidential candidate in the 2023 election after losing at the Peoples Democratic Party primary, without leaving the PDP, and his attempt to impeach his successor, Siminalayi Fubara, after their fallout, captures his ruthlessness and relentlessness in pulling down the roof when his interests are threatened.



## Nuhu Ribadu

His leadership as the inaugural Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, established by President Olusegun Obasanjo in 2003, recorded resounding successes, securing convictions of high-ranking politicians over financial crimes, earning him international recognition and applause and lending the anti-graft agency considerable credibility in the eyes of the general public. He would go on to become the flag bearer of the Action Congress of Nigeria in the 2011 presidential election, a contest he lost, finishing a distant third.



## George Akume

He is one of the few most enduring politicians who have not stepped away from public office since the return of democracy in 1999—spent 8 years as Governor of Benue, 12 years as senator, 4 years as Minister, and currently serves as the Secretary to the Government of the Federation—a feat that speaks to his political longevity and durability.



## Sen. Oluremi Tinubu

Wife of President Bola Tinubu and inarguably the First Lady with the most political experience since 1999, taking her own political identity and legislative record to the Presidential Villa. She remains the female lawmaker to have served the longest in the Senate and the only female senator to serve three consecutive terms between 2011 and 2023.



## Anyim Pius Anyim

Elected at 39 to become the youngest Senate President in the Fourth Republic. He went on to become the first non-career civil servant to serve as Secretary to the Government of the Federation in Nigeria in 2011, demonstrating a political career that combined legislative leadership with executive administration at the highest levels.



## Femi Falana, SAN

Renowned human rights activist and legal practitioner specializing in constitutional law and public interest litigation. He is one of Nigeria's strongest and most consistent voices for rule of law, justice and good governance, pursuing these through countless litigations and public debates. He has challenged government actions, defended activists and journalists, and argued landmark cases that have shaped the boundaries of civil liberties in Nigeria.



## Yemi Adamolekun

Human Right Activist and Executive Director, Enough Is Enough Nigeria, a civil society organization that advocates for good governance, social justice and public accountability in Nigeria. She is one of the arrowheads of the Bring Back Our Girls campaign, demanding the release of the schoolgirls abducted by Boko Haram from Chibok in 2014, and has gone to win the Global Citizen Prize for her efforts in fighting for citizens' rights.



## Omoyele Sowore

Human rights activist, founder of the African Action Congress and two-time presidential candidate, and convener of Revolution Now protests against bad governance and insecurity in 2019. Detained, arrested and arraigned multiple times over the past 7 years, he is clearly one of the most closely watched activists of this era. He has also built Sahara Reporters into one of Nigeria's most consequential investigative news platforms.



## Ohanaeze Ndigbo

Apex Igbo socio-cultural organization at the forefront of advocating for and advancing the interests of the South-East geo-political zone. Among other regional causes and national concerns, its topmost agenda has been the call for the rotation of the presidency to the East –being the only major ethnic group that has not produced a President since the return of democracy in 1999—which found its fullest expression in the 2023 Peter Obi presidential bid.



## Peter Obi

Ex-Anambra governor whose presidential pursuit in 2023 delivered the strongest third force performance since Nigeria's return to democracy, winning eleven states and the FCT. Driven largely by the Obidient movement which is dominated by youth, his cult following remains a wonder of Nigeria's contemporary politics. He also enjoys strong support from the South East geo-political zone, and his 2023 exploit is the closest to victory that any Igbo man has had in the Fourth Republic.



## Rabiu Kwankwaso

Ex-Kano governor and paramount leader of the red-cap Kwankwassiya movement concentrated and formidable in the North-West geo-political zone. He is an opposition figure known for his populist politics and revered for his grassroots penetration. Presidential aspirant under APC in 2015, presidential candidate of NNPP in 2023, the former minister and senator has never hidden his ambition to rule Nigeria.



## Prof. Attahiru Jega

Conducted the landmark 2015 general elections adjudged to be one of Nigeria's most credible elections in which the incumbent President lost to the opposition candidate for the first time in our nation's history. He will be remembered for modernizing and transforming Nigeria's electoral process through the introduction of the Electronic Card Readers and Permanent Voters Cards.



## Samson Itodo

Founder of YIAGA Africa, one of Nigeria's leading civil society organization promoting democratic governance, human rights and civic engagement. He was at the forefront of the Not Too Young To Run movement, an advocacy campaign that resulted in amendments to the Nigerian constitution, reducing the age thresholds for candidates seeking elective positions at various levels of government.



## Bishop Matthew Kukah

Nigeria's foremost cleric contributing hugely to democratic governance. Served in the Nigerian Investigation Commission of Human Rights Violations, National Political Reform Committee, Electoral Reform Committee, and National Peace Committee of the 2015 General Elections. He is the current Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Sokoto and founded Kukah Centre for the advancement of civic education and inclusive governance.



## Maurice Iwu

Chaired the Independent National Electoral Commission that conducted the 2007 General Elections, widely regarded as the most fraudulent in Nigeria's democratic history. The results were so deeply contested that appeals and supreme court rulings overturned gubernatorial outcomes in Ondo, Osun, Ekiti, Edo, Kogi, Bayelsa, Rivers states and many other legislative elections.



## Yemi Osinbajo

Vice President between 2015 and 2023, one of Nigeria's finest orators and intellectual firepower who went on to contest the presidential primary against his benefactor, sponsor and godfather, an act many received as betrayal, and others considered democratic - a debate that may remain unsolved till the end of time.



## Margaret Mwuese Icheen

First female Speaker of a State House of Assembly in Nigeria and West Africa. The trailblazing lawmaker made history at the dawn of the Fourth Republic in 1999 when she was elected Speaker of the Benue State House of Assembly, but resigned in 2002, citing entrenched corruption in the conduct of legislative business.



## Wole Soyinka

Fearless critic, pro-democracy activist, championing the entrenchment of good governance and democracy in Nigeria through his pen and voice. The 91-year old 1986 Nobel Laureate winner continues to advocate for social justice and drive social change, even in old age.



## Patricia Olubunmi Ette

Even though her tenure was short, she made history as Nigeria's first and only female Speaker of the House of Representatives. Got caught in a web of financial misconduct allegations, she succumbed to the heat of the kitchen and resigned 4 months after she shattered the glass ceiling.



## Ken Nnamani

Led and presided over the Senate that resisted, foiled and defeated the third term bid of President Olusegun Obasanjo in 2006, thereby championing legislative independence and enforcing constitutional term limits, at one of the most critical junctures of the nation's political history.



**NIGERIA  
GOVERNORS'  
FORUM**



## Senator Ahmed Lawal & Hon Nicholas Mutu

## Nigeria Governors Forum

## Aloma Mariam Mukhtar

The longest serving members of parliament in Nigeria's 4th Republic. Mutu, from Delta State, has served seven full terms as a member of the House of Representatives, while Lawal, from Yobe State, spent eight years (1999-2007) in the House alongside Mutu before ascending to the Senate. In 2019 he was elected Senate President. Their parliamentary longevity - 28 years each next year - is unprecedented in the history of Nigeria.

Nigeria's Governors definitely constitute the most powerful class of actors in the 4th Republic. No other group of political players comes close. They control intimidating budgets, hold Presidents to ransom, and do not shy away from dragging the Federal Government to the Supreme Court - and winning. Three of five Presidents since 1999 have come from the class of elected Governors, as well as all but one Vice President.

A trailblazer extraordinaire. She made history by becoming, in 2012, Nigeria's first female Chief Justice. She was the first woman from Northern Nigeria to qualify as a lawyer, after winning a prestigious government scholarship to study in the United Kingdom. First to be appointed a Magistrate. First female Justice of the Court of Appeal of Nigeria. First female Justice of the Supreme Court of Nigeria. Along the way, she inspired several generations of female lawyers.

# Defining Moments



## Occupy Nigeria

On a scale that could be regarded as the most widespread protest in Nigeria since 1999, Nigerians took to the streets from 2nd of January 2012 and sustained it for days across the country, grinding the nation to a halt. President Jonathan had announced the removal of the fuel subsidy on the first day of 2012, causing the pump price of petrol to surge overnight from ₦65 per litre to ₦141 per litre, a development that was thunderously rejected by all strata of Nigerian society. Even though the Jonathan administration yielded to the intense pressure, lowering the pump price to ₦97, the protest caused him irreparable political damage, impacting on his government's popularity and the public faith in his leadership, and contributed significantly to his defeat in the 2015 presidential election. The protest, powered by social media, would set a template for other civic undertakings by Nigerians to demand accountability and compel governments to act in the interest of the general public.



*"We want to reconcile all those who feel alienated by the past political events, heal wounds inflicted on our people and restore harmony in our country."- President Olusegun Obasanjo*

## State of Emergency in Ekiti and Plateau

The second term of President Olusegun Obasanjo recorded two declarations of state of emergency. In May 2004, he invoked emergency rule in Plateau State following a massacre of Hausa and Fulani Muslims in Yelwa earlier which triggered reprisal attacks on Christians in Kano and other parts of Northern Nigeria, dissolving the state's executive and legislature for six months, and appointing an interim administrator. In October 2006, the President suspended the Ekiti State legislature and executive through an emergency rule, following the impeachment of Governor Ayo Fayose, an action the President believed violated the constitution. While the declaration of emergency rule is within the exclusive authority of the President for the restoration of peace in crisis-ridden states, many argued that the conditions for the declaration were unmet in Ekiti and feared that future presidents could exploit and abuse the constitutional provision to autocratically advance self-serving political interests to the detriment of democratic ideals.

## Obasanjo Third Term Agenda

The attempt by the political machinery of President Olusegun Obasanjo, a former military head of state, to amend the constitution to remove the two-term limit for executive elective positions was met with fierce resistance from the opposition, legislators, civil society organizations, and the media. The Senate, in May 2006, dealt a decisive blow to the agenda by voting down the proposed amendment that would have cleared the path for the President to run for a third term. The resistance safeguarded the nation's democratic governance against one-man authoritarian rule that had long permeated the African continent. It also represented a landmark assertion of legislative independence in the face of a President who had demonstrated a formidable capacity to bend institutions to his will. The preservation of the two-term limit remains one of the proudest chapters in the story of Nigeria's democratic governance.



## Doctrine of Necessity

Following the failure of the then President Umaru Musa Yar'adua to transmit power to his Vice President during his prolonged illness and absence from office that grounded national governance, the 6th Senate, in its wisdom invoked the doctrine of necessity, a principle not backed by the constitution, that empowered Vice President Goodluck Jonathan to act as President. The Senate argued that the adoption of the principle served as a remedial bridge to the vacuum and shortsightedness that the framers of the constitution had missed and left unaddressed. This precedent has gone on to inform constitutional amendment that resulted in the passage of the First Alteration Act in 2011, with provision empowering the Vice President to act as the President automatically when the President is absent or unable to discharge his responsibilities for a period exceeding 21 days.

## Uwais Panel

The Electoral Review Committee set up by Late President Umaru Musa Yaradua, shortly after the commencement of his administration in 2007 stands till date as the most genuine and ambitious undertaking by any government to diagnose and find a lasting solution to the Nigeria's electoral process marred by systemic corruption, technical irregularities and structural inefficiency. The Committee's recommendations, though largely unimplemented, have become the pool of ideas from which subsequent reform attempts have been drawn. The introduction of PVC, BVAS, electronic transmission of results and other technological innovations, and the series of electoral act amendments that have come since 2010 all have their intellectual roots in the Uwais Panel report. Though Nigeria's electioneering isn't absolutely immune to emerging tactics and manipulation of politicians, what cannot be disputed is that the panel provided a framework designed to ensure freer, fairer and more credible elections.



## 2007 Election Nullification Spree

The most consequential casualty aftermath of the 2007 general elections was the judgments delivered by the courts on the integrity of the electoral process. Edo, Ondo, Ekiti, and Osun governorship elections were nullified by the Appeal court, which was, at the time, the apex gubernatorial election petition court, overturning results declared by INEC, ordering incumbents to vacate their seats and restoring stolen mandates to their rightful owners. The nullifications, despite being a triumph for democratic accountability, created political instability and subsequent off-cycle governorship elections in the affected states. There were also deep concerns about the integrity of the court proceedings, with allegations of corruption levelled against the then President of the Appeal Court, Justice Ayo Salami, by the ruling party, the PDP, who had lost their seats. Ultimately, the spree served as a cautionary message to INEC that failure to deliver credible elections would leave the judges, rather than the voters, to determine who governed the people.

## Bring Back Our Girls Movement

First, it was deafening silence from the Nigerian government, then outrage from the general public. The abduction of 276 girls from a government secondary school in Chibok, Borno State, by the Boko Haram terrorist group in 2014 became a global concern. Under the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls, the world spoke in one clear voice. In Nigeria, #BringBackOurGirls became a daily vigil, and protesters gathered in Abuja day after day, demanding government action for the safe rescue of the victims. The movement enjoyed wide solidarity from across the world, including international human rights organizations and world leaders, and the hashtag recorded millions of posts from internet users. The Jonathan administration's failure to secure the girls' release became potent campaign ammunition for the opposition, the All Progressives Congress, and the consequences were severe and lasting. Unfortunately, 12 years after the incident, even after the opposition had taken charge, many of the schoolgirls have yet to regain their freedom.

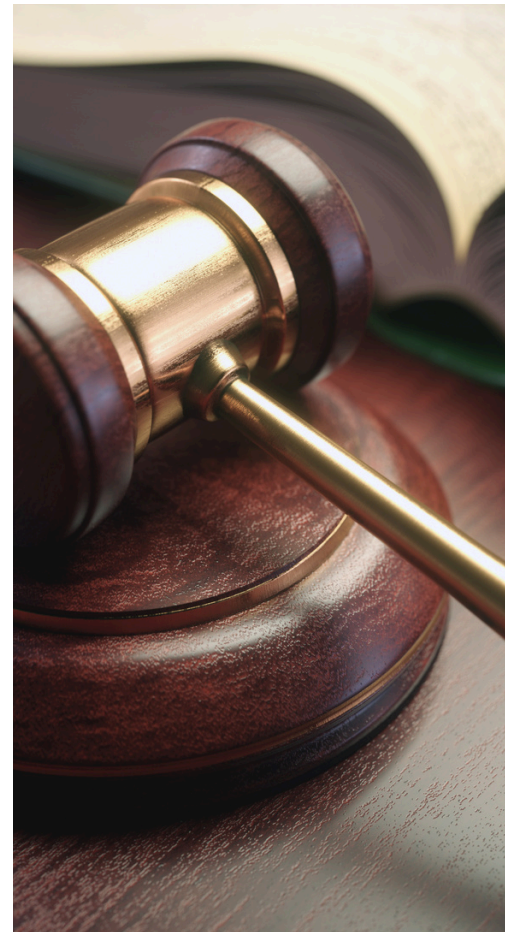


## Incumbent President Conceding Defeat

Against the run of play, Nigeria witnessed a sitting president voluntarily concede defeat and commit to a peaceful transfer of power in 2015. The concession by President Goodluck Jonathan was graceful and swift, even before INEC's official declaration of Muhammadu Buhari as the winner of the presidential election. For decades, the Nigerian political landscape had been marked by a profound reluctance to accept electoral defeat, often resulting in violence or legal challenges. The peaceful power transfer, an enduring legacy of President Jonathan that outlasted the controversies of his administration, significantly upgraded Nigeria's democratic credentials and created a model that other African leaders were explicitly urged to emulate. Undeniably, that singular act transformed the country's standing in the eyes of the international community.

## Èmi ló kàn Declaration

Incontrovertibly, the declaration by Bola Ahmed Tinubu, on the 3rd of June, 2022, in Abeokuta, Ogun State, at a meeting with Ogun State All Progressives Congress delegates, is the most audacious, most brazen and most powerful statement by any presidential aspirant since the return of democracy. Speaking mainly in Yoruba, he took swipes unapologetically at the incumbent President, Vice President and Ogun state governor, taking credit for their emergence. Èmi ló kàn "It is my turn", the most explosive sentence in his 15-min speech did not only ignite a fierce national conversation and controversy about political entitlement, party ownership, power rotation and regional political equity, but also became the rallying cry, identity and slogan of his presidential bid. His eventual victory at the party primary one week later, and the 2023 Presidential election has come to validate and seal his assertion. It ended as a prophecy fulfilled.



## State of Emergency in Rivers

Following a prolonged political impasse in Rivers State between Governor Siminalayi Fubara and his godfather, Nyesom Wike – who retained enormous influence over the Rivers State House of Assembly – President Bola Tinubu declared a state of emergency in Rivers State, suspending the governor, deputy governor, and the state legislature for six months, and appointing Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ibas (retired) as Sole Administrator. While critics argued that the situation in Rivers did not meet the constitutional threshold for a state of emergency, proponents contended that the declaration helped protect the mandate of the Governor, who was on the verge of being impeached by the hostile state parliament and forestalled a security breakdown that the impeachment could have triggered. The Rivers State emergency situation has indeed raised questions about the limit of Nigeria's power over state autonomy, and the corrosive influence of political godfatherism that the country has not yet fully answered.

## Fuel Subsidy Removal

“Subsidy is gone” may remain the shortest statement by a Nigerian President with the most far-reaching impact on all the citizens and the greatest test of Nigeria’s resilience. In his inaugural speech on the 29th day of May, 2023, President Bola Tinubu declared an end to the fuel subsidy regime, a policy option many economists and politicians had clamoured for. Instantaneously, the pump price of petrol went from less than N200 to about N700, cost of transportation doubled and prices of food and essential goods in markets skyrocketed. Inflation surged, hardship reigned supreme, poverty tightened its grip. In response, the federal government introduced a set of palliatives to cushion the effect on livelihood, with priority given to the needy and most vulnerable, civil servants, and small and medium enterprises. Worth highlighting is the minimal resistance by the populace to the subsidy removal, a goodwill past presidents who made similar attempts did not enjoy. Three years later, the impact remains deeply felt by most Nigerians.



## End SARS Movement

End SARS was a decentralised social movement and series of mass protests against police brutality in Nigeria that mainly occurred in October 2020, predominantly led by young Nigerians. The movement took aim at the Special Anti-Robbery Squad, a police unit set up in 1992 to combat armed robbery but which had since become notorious for kidnapping, random arrests, extortion, torture, and extrajudicial killings. The protests began on October 8, 2020, with demonstrators presenting five demands to the government: the release of all arrested protesters, justice and compensation for victims of police brutality, an independent body to investigate abuses, psychological retraining of disbanded SARS officers, and better pay for the Nigerian Police Force. On October 20 2020, the army and police fired into a crowd of young protesters gathered at Lagos’s Lekki toll gate, with many people feared dead.

## The Oputa Panel

Seventeen days into the Fourth Republic, President Olusegun Obasanjo inaugurated the Human Rights Investigation Panel with a solemn mandate to establish evidence of cases of human rights abuses, identify the perpetrators, and recommend measures to redress the injustices perpetrated during the military era between 1966 and 1999. Unfortunately, what was presented to Nigerians as an undertaking to tell the truth and heal the wounds of the past failed to realize its objectives, principally because of the absence of political will among successive governments to implement the recommendations of the panel, led by the Late Justice Chukwudifu Oputa. Up to this day, justice has not been served. No reparation, no conviction, no closure. Just holes in the heart of the people and dust on the pages of the report.



## National Confab

Some 492 delegates drawn from across Nigeria's geographical, religious, professional, and political divides convened in Abuja between March and August 2014, at the instance of President Goodluck Jonathan, to deliberate on fundamental national issues, and produced a comprehensive report recommending fiscal federalism, creation of new states, devolution of power, restructuring, resource control, and state police, among other resolutions, to address the key challenges inhibiting national cohesion, political development and socio-economic progress captured in a 10,335-page conference report. Though widely regarded as the most comprehensive blueprint for constitutional reform, the report remains on the shelf gathering dust, waiting for the Presidency to take interest in it. When will this be?

## APC Coalition

A merger of the Action Congress of Nigeria, the Congress for Progressive Change, the All Nigeria Peoples Party, and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance, led to the establishment of the All Progressives Congress in 2013, and brought an abrupt end to the 16-year reign of PDP in 2015. The coalition—largely led by Muhammadu Buhari, leader of the CPC with a cult following in Northern Nigeria, and Bola Ahmed Tinubu, leader of the ACN with a strong base in South-West Nigeria—with the change mantra and campaign centred on anti-corruption, economy, and security, has gone on to win three successive presidential elections, displacing the PDP as the largest political party in Sub-Saharan Africa. APC's historic victory against an incumbent president in 2015 remains a watershed and the most successful experiment in coalition-building in the history of Nigeria's democratic governance.



## Obidient Movement

In the lead-up to the 2023 general elections, supporters of Peter Obi, the presidential candidate of the third force, Labour Party, coalesced under the identity of the "Obidient Movement", and emerged as one of Nigeria's strongest political crusades in the Fourth Republic driven largely by the young population, most of them yearning for a new order outside of the two main political parties, PDP and APC, and the South Easterners who rallied around their kinsman. Though the movement predominantly established their strength on social media, but various mobilization efforts of the group not only drove voter registration among the youth but also earned Peter Obi over 6 million votes at the polls, under a party which could not boast of physical party structure in many local government areas across the country. The exploits of the movement attested to the shift in political consciousness of the youth population, regardless of the varying sentiments and agenda that shaped its composition.



# HAPPY DEMOCRACY DAY

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+234 916 902 6986

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