



Socialist Workers & Youth League

WORKERS & YOUTH, UNITY & FREEDOM

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PRESS STATEMENT (9th March 2023)

NURSES STRUGGLE AGAINST THE NEW VERIFICATION GUIDELINES

Nigerian nurses have organised themselves across borders from Nigeria to the most remote place on earth where they currently practise, to resist the new guidelines put in place by the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria (NMCN). They see the new NMCN verification guidelines which mandate nurses to pay a non-refundable fee for verification as supposed to be free, have a 2-year post-qualification experience from the date of issuance of a practising licence, and a letter of recommendation from the CEO of the healthcare facility they work in and puts the minimum wait time for verification at 6 months as supposed to just days that it used to take, as a deliberate act to revoke their hard-won struggle for autonomy from medical doctors, worsen their working conditions which have never been good in this part of the world and prevent them from seeking better professional and economic option outside Nigeria.

As a response to these stringent verification guidelines, they launched an online campaign that caught the attention of Nigerians at home and abroad. They did not stop with the online campaign; they went on to organise themselves to stage a massive protest across Nigeria against the NMCN. The widely covered protest, in which nurses who are members of SWL played a central party, saw thousands of nurses across Abuja, Bayelsa, and, Lagos flood the streets despite threats from the State Security Service SSS, making demands that included the complete reversal of the new guidelines to the status quo, making the minimum wait time for verification 3 - 4 days, improved employment opportunities for Nurses, increment of Nurses salaries and hazard allowance, proper welfare of Nurses, health insurance amongst others.

The government has used several tactics of intimidation and distraction to try break the spirit of the protesting nurses. These include pegging the verification fee from unspecified to 68,875 naira, changing the wait time from a minimum of 6 months to unspecified, changing the 2 years post-qualification experience to 2 years of registration with NMCN and a recommendation letter from the head of the nursing department of the Healthcare facility rather than the CEO that was initially stated.

Despite the state's intimidation and diversion tactics, the nurses have remained resolute in their struggle against the new guidelines, its reversal to the status quo (that saw the verification process take a minimum wait time of 3 weeks, no post-qualification experience or registration years required, and no recommendation letter from either the CEO or the head of the nursing department of their workplace), and, that focus of the NMCN on improving the working conditions of nurses and not looking for ways to prevent them from seeking better professional and economic options wherever they find one.

As the nurses in Nigeria were making demands at the barricades, the nurses in the diaspora were taking legal action against the NMCN seeking an injunction from the court to prevent the NMCN from implementing the new guidelines. The nurses also joined the nationwide #EndHungerProtest again, to demonstrate to the ruling class that struggle is not business as usual and that they are ready to fight until victory is achieved.

The relentless struggle of the nurses recently prompted the House of Representatives to take action. It passed a resolution urging the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Nigeria (NMCN) to suspend the implementation of the new verification guidelines. Instead, they advocated for the continuation of the old guidelines until a thorough investigation is conducted. Nurses in Nigeria and the diaspora must remain vigilant, as their struggle is not yet Uhuru. They cannot afford to become complacent. They must continue to organise, and exert pressure through sustained online campaigns, confrontations, and protests against the NMCN and the ruling elite. Victory can only be achieved through persistent action against the ruling class.

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