

My View on The Viral Video on Ibrahim Idris, the Nigerian Inspector-General of Police

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The IG that I Knew was not an Imbecile
The viral video on Ibrahim Idris, the Nigerian Inspector-General of Police (IG), ostensibly portrayed as not being able to read a speech is of serious concern to Nigeria and beyond. The right question should be why we could entrust a major security apparatus to such a man. This video lends credence to the position coming out of the Nigerian Senate that Ibrahim Idris is not fit to hold such a high office. So, is the video a case of the Yoruba saying on causation/correlation to the effect that: “Aje ke l’ana, omo ku l’eni, tani ko mope Aje ana ni o pa omo je” (the Witch carried yesterday and a child died today, who does not know that the child was killed by the Witch)? Of course, I cannot conclude that the video came out of the Senate or those in support of the institution that is engaged in a power tussle with the IG.

Furthermore, the IG, in office has attracted quite a number of controversies, some of which could be said to be of his own making. For instance, I still cannot understand why the President issued him an instruction and he avoided it. Without telling us why he failed to go, his inaction undermines the presidency before the Nation. It is definitely not a matter to be privately discussed at Aso Rock and swept away. The Senate inviting him for a hearing and he wanting to be represented is a bit different from his not moving to Benue State at the height of the killings in that state on the instruction of the President. We are all aware that he had arrested a number of Senators, within the law, to my mind. Only yesterday, the Senate President who should have been invited for questioning by the IG for a transparent investigation over his mentioning in the Panama and Paradise papers was purported to have released a statement to the effect that the police are trying to set him up. And the police went on the defensive denying that this is the case. We all should rally behind the IG in upholding the rule of law in his running battles with a bunch of over-paid Nigerians who feel they may be above the law.

However, I want to avoid undertaking an assessment of the IG in the performance of his duties and in particular, as it affects the union being formed against him at the Senate and his partially rising up to the occasion in bringing crooks to book. On the viral video, short of the IG being sick and needing medical attention, my view, in spite of my limited knowledge on the crafting of digital technology, is that the trending video can only be a technological manipulation. This submission, comes from my working with the IG at the United Nations.

I served the UN in peacekeeping in Liberia from 2006 to 2010. I took notice of Ibrahim Idris as he occasionally represented his Ghanaian Commissioner of UN police whenever that one was unavoidably absent at the Senior Mission Leaders Team meetings that I sat on with another Nigerian, General Obiakor, who was Force Commander. I learnt that Ibrahim Idris had returned to Liberia as a UN P-5 officer after an initial secondment by Nigeria. He could not have secured Senior Police Officer post making him number 3 in the UN police hierarchy UN if he was an imbecile as he is being portrayed in the viral video. The UN Deputy Commissioner of Police post was vacant in Liberia. Ibrahim Idris subsequently, competed for it and lost to an Indian national. He felt he was cheated and I could see elements of that as the Head of the Mission had started saying she was surrounded by too many Nigerians in leadership positions.

However, Idris won at the same level D-1 and served the UN as Deputy Commissioner in East Timor. His departure from Liberia was the last time I saw him till today. That last meeting was as I led the Nigerian community as we had a big send off for him. The former President of East Timor who was in charge of the country when he served the UN which partly ran the country, Nobel Laureate José Ramos-Horta became my boss in Guinea-Bissau in 2013 in the service of the UN. He gave many accolades to me about Ibrahim Idris as I served as his Chief of Staff. He asked me to help find Idris and get him to come to Guinea-Bissau and serve the UN there. I contacted Ibrahim Idris by phone and he informed me he was pursuing Mni at Kuru. And he declined my proposition. He competed for a UN Commissioner of Police post late 2015 and won to be a D-2. He then went incommunicado. Unknown to me that he was planning to be the IG in Nigeria, I wrote my last communication with him by email pressing that he should accept the post in Darfur, Sudan, where I was. For me, it would be a boost to the number of Nigerians in leadership position. He has not responded to my message till today.

Has he subsequently developed neurological problems since my last phone interaction with him in 2013? After all, we are a people who lack the courage to demand to know about the health status of our public officials including the President. Well, if that imbecilic tendency in the video is from an illness that makes the Ibrahim Idris I knew different from the one of today, we need to be understanding. Anyone can be sick. It means Nigeria has another medical bill to pay as a nation. Or are we facing dirty political power-play manifesting in a technological manipulation to suggest that the IG refused to go to the Senate as a way to avoid being seen on national TV as unfit? Of course I cannot say. As a technological lay person, I start to wonder about how many cut and pastes and from many speeches before the same audience, could be at play.

However, the office of the IG needs to be more pro-active on ensuring the rule of law by bringing to book as many thieving Senators as necessary. Until they amend the constitution to also give themselves immunity, they are not above the law.

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