

What President Buhari is getting right/wrong in his fight against corruption

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NIGERIA

During his presidential campaign, President Muhammadu Buhari was able to garner enough support to win because of an intense focus on fighting corruption, a problem that has constantly plagued successive Nigerian governments. In his inauguration speech, he memorably declared that “In the face of dwindling revenues, a good place to start the re-positioning of Nigeria’s economy is to swiftly tackle two ills that have ballooned under the present administration: waste and corruption.” Here, he promised to take concrete steps to aid in restoring transparency and accountability to the public offices in nation.

However, after a review of President Muhammadu Buhari’s first hundred days in office, critics declared that not enough had been done to fulfil his promises on fighting corruption. In a seeming response, the president has recently taken steps in his fight against corruption by arresting key people allegedly involved in diversion of funds.

Now that the much anticipated fight against corruption is in full swing Nigerians have been shocked by revelations of how deep the rot goes, with some accusing even the president himself of involvement. But the current anti-corruption fight has not been universally praised with some Nigerians supporting the general idea but criticizing Buhari’s execution.

Here’s what Buhari has done right and wrong in his quest to rid Nigeria of corruption.

The right:

Actions that speak louder than words

Buhari did not have to verbally declare that there will be no sacred cows in his anti-corruption fight. He is showing Nigerians by ordering or allowing the arrests of prominent citizens in society. By doing so, he is proving to the people that he is not afraid to take on the ‘big guns’ in the society. This may be winning the trust of Nigerians.

For example, when Buhari received the investigative committee’s report on the controversial arms deal, he immediately authorized the law enforcement agencies to arrest the people involved. Sambo Dasuki, the former National Security Adviser and other well-known Nigerians were arrested, questioned and charged to court.

Following due process

Although there were some initial hiccups, Buhari scored another point by allowing the rule of law to prevail when suspected corrupt officials are arrested. A good example of this is the ongoing trial of Raymond Dokpesi, the chairman of DAAR Communication. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) filed six charges against him for receiving N2.1billion from the former NSA, Sambo Dasuki out of the funds meant for the purchase of arms for the Nigerian military.

Dokpesi was remanded in Kuje Prison in Abuja until he met the bail set for him by the Federal High Court, Abuja. However, his trial continues in February 2016. The other culprits involved in the controversial arms deal have also been arraigned at the Abuja High Court, where charges of a criminal breach of trust and the unlawful diversion of N32 billion were brought against them.

Keeping Nigerians in the know

Although the president is popularly known for keeping mum on some of his decisions, he is not

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keeping quiet about his battle against corruption. Buhari has shared his plans on how he intends to fight corruption every chance he gets and has done so right from his campaign days until present. Recently, in a statement by Garba Shehu, Buhari declared that all the money that public officials forcefully took from the country in the past 16 years must be returned. He said for the corrupt officials, “the day of reckoning is gradually approaching.” The president’s outspokenness has put a lot of Nigerians at ease and is helping them build trust in their leader.

The wrong:

Abacha’s loot

Sani Abacha was not named the 4th most corrupt leader in the world for nothing. He allegedly robbed Nigeria of \$5 billion before his death 1998. In March of 2014, the United States Department of Justice revealed that it had frozen more than \$458 million believed to have been illegally obtained by Abacha and other corrupt officials.

Therefore, in President Buhari’s grand fight against corruption, his first point of call should have been going after the biggest looter which is the late Sani Abacha, but instead, he choose to start his probe from 1999. He [erroneously](#) [2] declared that Abacha (who even the notoriously mum Swiss banking system agreed was corrupt) did not steal from the national treasury.

Many have said that if Buhari wants to fight corruption fair and square, then he should begin with previous military regimes, especially the dictatorships of the 1980s and 1990s.

Partisanship

Thus far, Buhari’s war on corruption seems to involve only the members of the opposition party. The majority of the corrupt officials that have been arrested are People’s Democratic Party (PDP) members. The names that have been mentioned in relation to the \$2 billion arms deal, including Bode George, Peter Odili, Attahiru Bafarawa, and Sambo Dasuki, are all prominent members of the PDP. Does this mean that there are no corrupt APC officials? Earlier this year, Fashola was accused of questionable expenditures. APC Senate President Bukola Saraki who was charged by the Conduct Bureau on 13 counts of corruption. Current Minister of Transport and former Rivers State governor Rotimi Amaechi has been accused of diverting money from his state treasury to fund Buhari’s campaign. Sarai’s trial has currently been suspended, and no formal investigations have been opened against the other two APC stalwarts.

President Buhari is right in moving to tackle one of Nigeria’s greatest problems but the question is whether his errors will derail what could be a very important step in the right direction.

The post [What President Buhari is getting right/wrong in his fight against corruption](#) [3] appeared first on [Ventures Africa](#) [4].

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