

23rd April, 2018

The Inspector General of Police,
Nigerian Police Force Headquarters
Louis Edet House
Shehu Shagari Way
Central Business District
Abuja. FCT



**DEMAND FOR THE INVESTIGATION OF THE CERTIFICATE SCANDAL
INVOLVING SENATOR FOSTER OGOLA; SENATOR REPRESENTING BAYELSA
WEST IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

The above subject matter refers.

The Human and Environmental Development Agenda Resource Centre is a non-governmental organization and non-partisan human rights and development league. It has the mandate to protect and promote universally recognized human rights, accountability and environmental justice in Nigeria and Africa, in accordance with international standards. These objectives are pursued through research and publications, campaigns, human rights education and empowerment projects and programmes.

We are writing with respect to the confidential report on the Leaks.NG platform as regards the certificate scandal involving Senator Foster Ogala of the 8th assembly. HEDA as a member of the Leaks.NG is privy to the said report which was published on The Cable.ng; an online newspaper on the 11th day of April, 2018. The Leaks.NG is a coalition of news and civil society organizations, which provide a platform for Nigerians to submit evidence of wrongdoing by public office holders in Nigeria.

The said report contained details of the discovery that Senator Foster Ogola; the vice chairman of the senate committee on information communication technology and cybercrime. His official profile on the National Assembly website says he has a Ph.D from GMF Christian Unit. Discoveries show that there is no official site for the university and the said university is not amongst the universities approved by the National Universities Commission. An online search also showed that there is no research paper or thesis to his name online, even though he purportedly got the degree in 2012.

The said senator is credited with having a Ph.D in Christian Leadership from the GMF Christian University, Lagos, the same course he reportedly has a Msc. in from the Imo State University, Owerri.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that an inquiry by the International Centre for Investigative Reporting (ICIR) revealed that the Federal Government has not licenced the GMF Christian University, Lagos, where Ogola claimed to have earned his Ph.D from in 2012.

Also, the Director of Corporate Communication at the National Universities Commission; Ibrahim Yakasai was contacted on the validity of the institution and his response was that "We have never heard of that name." In addition to his response, he provided a copy of the commission's weekly bulletin showing a list of the 57 illegal universities operating in the country; GMF Christian University was not among, buttressing the fact that the commission is not aware of its proceedings.

The said director also pointed out the fact that since 1999, the National Universities Commission has approved of 74 universities in the country and any certificate obtained from the GMF Christian University or any other degree will not be recognized.

The Leaks.NG coalition has also made discoveries on the fact that the said GMF Christian Universities as at the time of the publication of the report has no website offering information on the institution or its courses and there is no information on the Christian leadership course the embattled senator claims to have a Ph.D in.

Premium Times, another online newspaper reached out to Senator Ogola to speak on the allegations levelled against him and give his reaction to GMF Christian University being an unaccredited institution in Nigeria.

In response, the senator said: "Kindly clarify for me if Premium Times does exist, to entertain allegations from third parties, whose identities are not mentioned, especially, when they are criminal in nature."

The lawmaker went on to note that the allegations could be a product of "mischief makers with a potential to foment distraction from weighty matters of state."

On the unaccredited state of the GMF Christian University, the senator was asked if there was an exemption from the NUC on the Christian Leadership course which Ogola purportedly has a doctorate degree in. Misunderstanding the question, the lawmaker retorted: "When did students or products of universities become accrediting bodies?"

In an attempt to verify GMF Christian University existence and understand how it operates in Nigeria, The Cable, paid the academy a visit. The Cable traced the Gospel Missionary Foundation (GMF) Theological University to No. 165 Isolo Road, Cele Bus stop, Egbe-Ikotun, Lagos, and realised that the controversial university lies on the first floor of a two-storey building. Besides the one and only lecture room, which was empty at the time of visit, there are about three other rooms serving as offices. Hope Obioha, the registrar and wife of the president of the university, Daniel Obioha, an acclaimed professor, received the reporter who went there under the guise of a prospective student.

She took the reporter to her office where she introduced him to the university and the courses it offers. According to the material given, GMF Christian Theological University was established on May 4, 1988, and is registered by the federal government. It seeks to fulfil its commitment to the individual special ministry calling, through graduate education, professional development and spiritual formation in all its activities including teaching, nurturing, worship, service, research, publication and missions.

Daniel Obioha and his wife established the university. When asked if the NUC has accredited the university, the registrar said they do not operate like a secular university, hence, the university is not registered under NUC. She presented the "accreditation certificate" of the universities by some international bodies. Checks revealed that all the bodies that gave the debatable accreditation do not have an online presence.

However, one of the materials she released contains the graduating list from 2013 to 2016. It is worthy to note at this juncture that 2012 is the year Ogola claimed to have obtained his PhD in Christian Leadership. Additionally, the Christian Leadership course was not reflected on the list of courses offered by the school at doctorate level.

On a second visit to the GMF Christian University on March 13, the centre was empty again as the man who introduced himself as a lecturer said it was examination time. He said, while the full-time students attend lectures on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, the part-time students go on Saturdays alone.

He was reluctant to release the list of those who graduated in 2012 but the reporter obtained a Skye bank account of the university in order to pay for the admission process for a "diploma in theology." At the end of both visits, The Cable was still unable to establish the veracity of the Senator's claim that he attended the university and has a PhD. in the Christian Leadership course.

The Premium Times Centre for Investigative Journalism (PTCIJ) was unable to find any Christian Leadership course offered in Nigeria but a University in Boston explained that the course teaches how to apply biblical and theological principles to leadership situations. Courses may cover topics such as cultural diversity,

Christian ethics and church history. Students may need to complete an internship or field experience amongst other things.

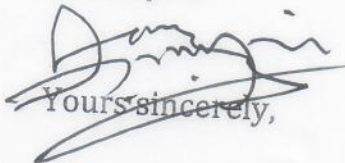
In an attempt to verify whether or not the senator has used the skills acquired through the purported doctorate degree from the shady GMF Christian University, OrderPaperNG reached out to his office in the national assembly to inquire about bills he has sponsored or motions he has raised. Unfortunately, his legislative aides proved highly unhelpful, claiming they could not divulge without Ogola's approval. A quick search through national assembly archives shows that the senator in question has sponsored just two bills and one of them was stood down. While he is credited with contributing a lot to motions and debates, it is lamentable that there is nothing exclusive Ogola has spearheaded to bring positive outcomes in the 8th assembly.

On the whole, it is our observation that since the inception of democracy in Nigeria, lawmakers at various times have been exposed for the offence of certificate fraud. From the Salisu Buhari scandal in 1999, the recent Dino Melaye certificate issue, the most recent being the Nse Ekpenyong certificate forgery issue in March.

We thereby humbly urge you to use your good office to address this issue vide a detailed investigation and prosecution of the embattled Senator where indicted. This is expedient in putting a halt to the ugly trend of certificate fraud/forgery especially in the 'hallowed' chambers where the laws of our land ordinarily originate from. Failure to forestall this unfortunate development by a decisive action that will serve as an effective deterrence is likely to make our legislature a laughing stock of the global community, in addition to offending the sensibilities of well-meaning Nigerians who believe and also choose to work towards the possibility of a 'corruption free' Nigeria.

We look forward to your prompt action and response.

Thank you.


Yours sincerely,

Olanrewaju Suraju
(Chairman)