

# Nigeria: a will for political change

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A double relief prevails in Nigeria. The presidential elections of late March, 2015, were conducted without any outbreaks of violence, and the outgoing President, Goodluck Jonathan, was beaten. With a score of 54% of the votes, Muhammadu Buhari won a clear victory, confirmed during the subsequent state governor elections, where his organization, the APC (All Progressives Congress), won 21 states of the 36 that make up the federation of Nigeria. Despite the threats of Boko Haram and the many technical incidents that marred the ballot, Nigerians massively mobilized to end fifteen years of rule by the People's Democratic Party (PDP).

## Discredited leaders

If the IMF and the World Bank have closed their eyes to the corruption and squandering of the country's resources by the ruling clan, they have on the other hand demanded the end of energy subsidies, which have mechanically increased the price of transport and essential products for the population. Unemployment is endemic and public services are dilapidated.

The fight against Boko Haram is a tragic example of the pernicious policies of the government. Initially, under the pretext of combating this Islamic sect, the Nigerian army spent the bulk of its time attacking the people and executing young people suspected of being members, which has only strengthened the social basis of the jihadist group. Then, considering that Boko Haram was a problem confined to the north of the country, the government became progressively less interested in it. It was only three weeks after the abduction of the young girls of Chibok by Boko Haram that Goodluck deigned to make a statement, and his only action was to imprison the activists of the organization BringBackOurGirls.

Boko Haram has also highlighted the state of decay of the Nigerian army who nonetheless benefit from 40% of the national budget. These sums are diverted by the senior officers who leave rank and file soldiers without ammunition in the face of jihadists. Soldiers who have fled have been brought before the courts for mutiny and face the death penalty.

## Buhari, a hope without foundation

In this most chaotic situation, Buhari is presented as the man of the hour, honest and capable of restoring order. The integrity of this former putschist, who has conducted two coups, is most dubious. During his brief stay in power, he closed his eyes to the corruption of some dignitaries. With respect to order, his very special conception is combined with numerous violations of human rights: he has bloodily repressed Islamist revolts and imprisoned many human rights activists and

trade unionists.

His economic project is tinged with nationalism, at least in discourse, but barely differs from that of his predecessor. His mentor in economics is Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the former director of the Nigerian branch of the multinational Mobil Oil and one of the richest men in the country.

The desire for political change which has manifested itself in the country can be an opportunity for the progressive forces who, despite their weakness, can rely on a powerful trade union movement to defend economic and social rights and ultimately build an alternative.

**Paul Martial**

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\* Translation IVP. <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/>