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October 21, 2020

H.E. Muhammadu Buhari
President of The Federal Republic of Nigeria
Aso Villa, Abuja
Nigeria

Dear President Buhari,

We are writing to you to express our grave concerns regarding state-sanctioned violence in response to the non-violent #EndSARS protests in Nigeria, calling for police reform and the end of police brutality. We are particularly concerned with the documented force used by the Nigerian police and military, which resulted in the loss of lives and injured dozens of protestors like the recent events at the Lekki Tollgate on 20 October 2020.

Mr. President, preventing the use of excessive force, while maintaining the rule of law, is a global issue and it is one with which we here in the United States are also grappling. We do not claim to have the answers, however as nations work to meet the demands of their citizens, respect for human rights must be at the center of all responses especially the operations of security forces including the police. Transparency and accountability to citizens are also incredibly important. As you know, we firmly believe that individual lives and dignity matter as countries cope with the current challenges they face. Certainly, the actions of the protestors matter but the burden will always be on governments to protect their citizens.

This is a global issue and it is one that all governments must respond to. With this in mind, we welcome your decision to disband the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). However, Nigerian citizens have made it clear that they are seeking real and sustainable change. They are requesting more than renaming SARS to SWAT. Further, simply redeploying the former members of SARS will increase mistrust of the new units they join.

We therefore urge you to:

- Release all the protesters who were arrested for taking part in the #EndSARS protests over the last few weeks;
- Uphold the rights to non-violent protest and ensure the safety of protestors in accordance with the International Bill of Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended);
- Publicly commit to allow an independent investigation into human rights abuses committed by the SARS unit and the police in general and include youth representatives voted on by the public on the Judicial Panels of Inquiry;
- Allow an independent investigation of the actions that led to the killings at the Lekki Toll gate;
- Provide justice for the families of the victims of recent protests against police brutality; and
- Initiate comprehensive overall reform of the security sector, including incorporating accountability structures and the recommendations from the 5for5 made by Nigerian youth.

We look forward to hearing from you on these critical matters. We also look forward to engaging with the Nigerian Ambassador to the United States on this issue. Finally, we stand ready to support the reforms we hope that the Nigerian government will undertake, and that Nigeria needs.

Sincerely,



Karen Bass
Chair
Congressional Black Caucus

Cc. Michael Pompeo, Secretary of State
Tibor Nagy, Assistant Secretary of State for Africa
Nigerian Ambassador **to the United States**, **Sylvanus Adiewere Nsofor**