



# CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE OF LAGOS

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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Dialogue, Not Force**

The ongoing #EndSARS protests by Nigerian youths have continued in many cities of the country despite the government's swift response to their initial demands. It is clear that the disbandment of the dreaded Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and subsequent replacement with the Special Weapons and Tactics Team (SWAT) has not assuaged the demands of the youths, who have consistently trooped out on the streets in rain and sunshine, even at nights, to show their dissatisfaction with the solution offered by government to their demands. The issues are clearly more fundamental than the replacement of one police unit with another. The youths, and indeed most well-meaning Nigerians, are calling for justice for the individuals and families affected by the brutality of the policemen attached to the disbanded SARS unit. They are also using the protest to bring to the fore the systemic failures which have led to widespread corruption, lack of accountability and massive youth unemployment, among other ills.

A BBC News report on 15th October insinuated that the Nigerian Army may be deployed to quell the protests by force. This is very disturbing and we hope it does not happen. Such a measure, if adopted, can only lead to injuries and possible deaths, and an escalation of the protests. It has the tendency of turning the largely peaceful protests into a violent one.

We therefore urge the Federal Government to toe the line of engagement in dialogue, listening to the demands of the youth and other well-meaning Nigerians. We commend the government for acceding to the demands of the youth. Now, the whole country looks forward to practical steps that would be taken to implement them. We believe that a sincere and transparent response to the demands of the young people would go a long way in resolving the present impasse. The youths, on their part, must continue to go about their protests peacefully and not allow themselves to be led into any act of violence, no matter how small. We must all remember that the whole world is watching us to see how we handle this situation. We, therefore, call for dialogue and mutual understanding in addressing the situation at hand for the benefit of our young people and the future of our country.

+ Alfred Adewale Martins  
Archbishop of Lagos