

Hate speech declared “an act of terrorism” - Osinbajo

ABUJA, Nigeria - Acting Nigerian President, Prof Yemi Osinbajo, has “drawn a line” against hate speech, declaring it a “act of terrorism” which seeks to intimidate and ultimately, could result in bloodshed.



Professor Yemi Osinbajo

Prof Osinbajo made the remarks at The National Economic Council (NEC), National Security Retreat, State House, Abuja, last week.

Osinbajo spoke out about security, the economy and investment, and the fight against corruption.

“As you’re all aware, the Buhari administration came into office on a vision that covered three key areas: security, the economy and the fight against corruption.

“All three issues are closely linked, of course. Without guaranteeing security, we will struggle to attract the kind of investments, domestic or foreign, needed to create jobs and prosperity for our people. And when those jobs are hard to find and keep, our people will naturally be more susceptible to the lure of criminal activity. Which means that governments that are serious about fighting crime ought to be extremely serious about fighting poverty.”

Osinbajo said it was time to add action to analysis and implement the strategies talked about.

“Corruption and security are also interconnected. We are all witnesses to how, only a few years ago, much of North Eastern Nigeria was at risk to falling completely into the hands of Boko Haram, largely because widespread corruption in the military had robbed our troops of the resources and morale needed to fight and defeat the terrorists.

“This is a challenge to all of us, to confront these matters with utmost seriousness. Because the problems we face as a

nation are not static, but instead continue to evolve, our thinking and our solutions for them must also be equally dynamic, to take into account the peculiar realities of the 21st century.

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“I have spoken at a number of recent fora about how technology and the internet have altered the nature of conflict and war in contemporary times, enabling and amplifying the efforts and impact of terrorists, insurgents, warmongers, secessionists, and peddlers of hate speech.”

He expressed concern as to how law enforcement could take advantage of these same tools and technology in order to stay ahead of those who would use them to “create mischief, and cause terror, fear and bloodshed”.

Said Osinbajo: “These are the conversations that we should be having, and at the highest levels of government no less... The intimidation of a population by words, by speech, is an act of terrorism and this government intends to take this matter very seriously.”

Hate speech

He said the Federal Government had drawn the line on hate speech.

“Hate speech is a specie of terrorism. Terrorism as it is defined popularly is the unlawful use of violence or intimidation against individuals or groups especially for political ends. The law, that is the Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2011 (as amended), defines terrorism as *inter alia*, an act which deliberately done with malice which may seriously harm or damage a country or seriously intimidate a population.

“The intimidation of a population by words, by speech, is an act of terrorism and this government intends to take this matter very seriously. As I have said, we've drawn a line against hate speech, it will not be tolerated, it will be taken as an act of terrorism and all of the consequences will follow it.

“I call on all business, religious and political leaders, whatever your political leaning, your religion or tribe or faith to condemn in the strongest possible terms at all times, hate speech. Speech that promotes violence against an individual or group, especially when such comes from people of your own faith, tribe or group, your silence in such situations can only be seen as an endorsement.

“Hate speech, and the promotion of the same throughout history from Nazi Germany and the extermination of Jews to the Rwandan genocide, succeeded in achieving their barbarous ends by the silence of influential, voices from the aggressor communities.

“When leaders in communities that speak in such a manner as to create dissension or to intimidate a population are quiet, they do a great disservice to our unity and nation,” Osinbajo emphasised.

He called on all political leaders, religious leaders, business leaders to ensure that Nigerians do not tolerate, “by our silence, the hate speech that we hear every day in our community”.

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