

# Ekiti as a glimpse of 2011

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*By Okey Ndibe*

Those who persist in seeing Umaru Musa Yar'Adua as a democrat at heart had better pay attention to the macabre show the man took to Ekiti State. He comes across as a man who wants power at all cost and for its own sake.

He has not found the steam to redeem a two-year promise to declare a state of emergency in the power sector. Nigeria's worsening power woes have yet to register on the radar screen of this do-nothing occupant of Aso Rock. All he does now is promise improved power supply in the future – long after he must have left the stage.

Nigeria's economy is in more dire shape than Mr. Yar'Adua cares to tell his countrymen and women. Despite its upward trend in recent weeks, the price of oil – Nigeria's cash cow – remains low. By mid-2008, a barrel of oil was going for close to \$150. There's little hope that the price will go anywhere near last year's record levels anytime soon.

Nigeria's country's foreign reserves have dropped sharply – even though the Yar'Adua regime hasn't disclosed just how much is left.

The Nigerian stock market is embroiled in a grave crisis. A market that once yielded huge returns to investors has become one of the worst in the world. A responsive government would have investigated how the bottom fell out. A

responsible administration would have sought to determine whether the market was long manipulated, and by whom? Not Yar'Adua, a man who doesn't permit nightmarish economic news to interfere with his sleep.

It's known that numerous Nigerians betrayed their offices by accepting bribes from Halliburton, the U.S.-based oil services company. Several Halliburton officials have been indicted, and are being prosecuted in European, British and American courts.

What's happened to the suspected Nigerian beneficiaries of these bribes, among them two living ex-heads of state, a former vice president, and a former police honcho turned politician? As at the time of this writing, absolutely nothing. Yar'Adua warms up to corrupt elements. He keeps the doors of his official residence always open to the nation's league of corrupt players, retired and current. He has done zilch about the Siemens scandal in which, again, foreign multinational company bribed Nigerian officials. Wait a minute, I got that wrong. Yar'Adua did do something; he rewarded Siemens with plum contracts!

Yar'Adua is coming to the second anniversary of his tenancy in Aso Rock, and he has few, if any, achievements. This man has managed the rare feat of proving that it's possible to be a greater disaster than former President Olusegun

Obasanjo. Yar'Adua's ghastly run has been compounded by his feeble health and wilting personality.

Despite his remarkable deficits as a leader and man, Yar'Adua is, from every indication, eyeing a second term. And we have it on the authority of Mr. Tony Anenih that Yar'Adua has already "won" the 2011 presidential contest. Some weeks ago, Anenih, whose long and improbable career in the public arena can happen only in a space like Nigeria, said Yar'Adua has six years to go.

One could say to Anenih that only by rigging again would Yar'Adua ever find himself re-selected as Nigeria's president. To which, I suspect, Anenih would retort, "Tell me something I don't already know."

Two weeks ago, I wrote on this page that Maurice Iwu is as good as gone from his perch at the national electoral commission. It's a matter of time, but Iwu won't be around to misconduct the 2011 polls. Some may think that, once Iwu is gone, the ruling party would be too handicapped to steal elections. That's to naively believe that Nigeria doesn't have other men and women like Iwu.

Yar'Adua is desperate to hijack the prerogative to select the next umpire to preside over the 2011 version of the rigging extravaganza. Should the opposition parties and Nigerians let him get away with that outrageous arrogation, then we might as well surrender the next round of elections to Yar'Adua and his party of conquerors and rulers.

Last week, Yar'Adua found time out of his dozing schedule to make a stop in

Ekiti. He went to prepare the grounds for the PDP's conquest of the state in a governorship re-run election scheduled for April 25. He touted the alleged "transparency, accountability and hard work" of the party's candidate, Segun Oni, who spent twenty months in office before an appellate court determined he was a usurper, and ordered him to vacate.

Following Yar'Adua's opening remarks and supplications, Speaker Bankole Dimeji, who has erased any moral difference between him and his rustic predecessor, stepped forward to lay out the party's strategy for victory. In a sentiment that ought to earn him dismissal from office, he assured the party faithful that the party was capable of deploying soldiers during the forthcoming gubernatorial election.

Bankole - who later issued a weak clarification - implied that the army is an adjunct of the ruling party. His careless statement may well be an early sign of the shape of things to come in 2011.

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### About Okey Ndibe



Okey Ndibe is a novelist, poet and political activist. He is the author of *Arrows of Rain*, a critically reviewed novel published in 2000. Ndibe founded *African Commentary*, a magazine described as "award-winning and widely acclaimed." He is also a published poet, and a former associate professor of English at Bard College at Simon's Rock. He currently teaches fiction and African literature at Trinity College in Hartford, CT. Okey Ndibe is finishing his second novel titled *Foreign gods, incorporated*.

#### Speaking Engagements

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