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**Press Release**

**CONVICTION AND SENTENCING OF FAROUK LAWAN: CACOL COMMENDS ICPC, ASKS FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS.**

The Centre for Anti-Corruption and Open Leadership, **CACOL**, has hailed the conviction and sentencing of a former member of the House of Representatives, Farouk Lawan, by The High Court of the Federal Capital Territory for demanding a bribe of $3m and receiving $500,000 from businessman, Femi Otedola.

In a release issued by CACOL’s Director of Administration and Programmes, Tola Oresanwo, on behalf of Mr. Debo Adeniran, the Chairman of the Centre, he stated, “We would recall that in Suit No. FHC/HC/CR/76/2013, Lawan, a former House of Representatives member representing Bagwai/Shanono Federal Constituency of Kano State between 1999 and 2015 and former Chairman of the House of Representatives Ad-hoc Committee on Fuel Subsidy in 2012, was brought before the court over a $3m bribery charge filed by the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission on behalf of the Federal Government”.

The prosecution had accused him of demanding bribe of $3m and obtaining $500,000 from Otedola as inducement to remove his company from the list of indicted companies before the House of Reps Ad-hoc Committee on Fuel Subsidy.

Otedola, Chairman of Zenon Petroleum and Gas Limited, had told the court that he did not mount pressure on Lawan to remove his company’s name from the list of firms indicted for fuel subsidy fraud in 2012. Otedola said rather, Lawan, the then chairman of the ad hoc committee, got from him $500,000 out of the $3m the lawmaker demanded.

The court found Lawan guilty of the three charges against him and sentenced him to seven years’ imprisonment for the first count; seven years for the second count; and five years for count 3. The jail terms will run concurrently. The court also ordered him to return the $500,000 bribe. While delivering the judgment, Justice Angela Ataluka, stated that the prosecution proved its case beyond reasonable doubt and found the ex-lawmaker guilty of the charges.

The anti-corruption Czar opined that “We at CACOL, therefore, congratulate the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) for a job well done and for its meticulous and diligent prosecution of this case despite the long years involved in the litigation. However, we would like to ask some fundamental questions relating to the case which are as follow:

1. What happened to the Secretary of the then House of Representatives Ad-hoc Committee on Fuel Subsidy, Boniface Emenalor who was supposed to have been charged with Farouk Lawan as they were detained together initially? The ICPC should tell us why he is not having his day in court.
2. Does the successful “sting” operation, exonerate Femi Otedola’s Zenon Oil of culpability? We want to believe that if there was no case against his firm, the name of the firm won’t be on the list in the first place. Has the firm been exonerated or cleared by any court of law?
3. What happened to other firms and individuals that were fingered in the fuel subsidy scandal? What is their fate now? We would want the public to know”.

The Head of CACOL also added, “The law enforcement agencies should not wave Farouk Lawan’s alibi aside. His involvement in the bribery scandal could have been a frame-up after all. It could also be due to his negligence nevertheless, he is guilty as charged and we are happy that the law took its cause. For someone who headed the integrity group in the National Assembly, and earned himself the nickname “Mr. Integrity” his argument of frame up should not be dismissed and should also be investigated so as to be sure that those who are fighting corruption in the high places are not sacrificed on the altar of convenience. It is a known fact that corruption criminals are rich, powerful, influential and crookedly smart. They could create powerful networks and most of the times they can attempt to buy anything over including witnesses, evidences and even law enforcement officers and framing up someone who wants to get them to justice may not be outside their purview. So investigators should look into Lawan’s claim of alleged setup and come out with their report. This would encourage other well meaning Nigerians to be ready to come out and blow the whistle when it becomes necessary and do the needful whenever such duty keeps calling”.

**Mr. Tola Oresanwo**

**Director, Administration and Programmes, CACOL**