

Nigerian president's chief of staff dies of COVID-19



Lagos, April 20 (RHC)-- Abba Kyari, the trusted chief of staff to Nigeria's president Muhammadu Buhari has died from complications related to COVID-19 after a nearly month-long battle with the virus.

"The Presidency regrets to announce the passing of the Chief of Staff to the President, Mallam Abba Kyari," presidential spokesman Garba Shehu said Friday on Twitter. Kyari had been hospitalized in the commercial capital, Lagos, after testing positive for the coronavirus upon his return from a trip to Germany on March 15th.

Buhari, 77 years of age, tested negative for the coronavirus last month after Kyari's symptoms emerged. The number of infections in Nigeria have doubled to 542, with April 17th recording the highest number of confirmed cases in a day following an increase in testing.

Kyari, who was appointed to the position in 2015, was widely regarded as Buhari's most trusted adviser and flew to London last year to get Buhari to sign new oil legislation into law, bypassing Vice President Yemi Osinbajo and acting as de facto prime minister of Africa's biggest oil producer.

"The direction of future policy in Nigeria, as in so many other countries, is already hugely uncertain and this loss will add to that uncertainty," said Antony Goldman, founder of U.K.-based ProMedia Consulting, a consultancy focused on West Africa. "Kyari had excellent local and international networks across

business, security and diplomacy, not just in the U.K., where he studied, but across Europe, Asia and America, as well as the region itself.”

According to medical reports, Kyari had a "history of medical complications, including diabetes," so his health condition deteriorated rapidly when he was diagnosed with the virus. His loss comes in the midst of the increased insecurity facing the African country, which is also experiencing an internal economic blockade.

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