

Press Release – Avocats Sans Frontières France – 16/10/2025

Avocats Sans Frontières France/lawyers without Borders France Condemns the Continued Detention of Lawyer Chinedu Agu in Imo State, Calls for Immediate Release

Avocats Sans Frontières France (ASF France) /Lawyers Without Borders France, strongly condemn the ongoing detention of Legal Practitioner and former Secretary of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Owerri Branch, Chinedu Agu. Mr. Agu is currently remanded at the Owerri Custodial Centre over allegations of criminal defamation and incitement, stemming from Facebook posts he made concerning the Imo state government.

The continued detention of Mr. Agu, since September 23, 2025, represent a grave assault on the fundamental right to freedom of expression online and the digital rights in Nigeria. The e-RIGHTS Project, which works to advance digital rights and freedom of expression online in Nigeria, is actively representing Mr. Agu in court to challenge this violation of his rights.

Speaking in a closed-door media briefing, the Country Director of ASF France in Nigeria, Angela Uwandu Uzoma-Iwuchukwu emphasized that the organization strongly condemns the use of allegations such as "criminal defamation" and "incitement" as a tool to silence critical voices and stifle legitimate public discourse. **“We are further disappointed that his bail was not granted by the Federal High Court, today 16th October 2025. Mr. Agu’s consistent calls for accountability of the Imo state government is a protected exercise of his fundamental right to free speech.”**

ASF France assert that:

1. Critiques of government and public officials are cornerstones of a functioning democracy and are protected under Section 39 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) and international human rights treaties to which Nigeria is a signatory.
2. Abuse of Judicial Process Must Cease: The circumstances surrounding Mr. Agu's arrest, the nature of the charges, and the procedural hurdles encountered, including the prosecution's attempt to delay the bail hearing, suggest a systematic effort to penalize and intimidate a citizen for exercising his fundamental rights.
3. We demand the immediate and unconditional release of Chinedu Agu. We call on the Imo State government, the Nigeria Police Force, and all relevant state actors to respect the rule of law, cease the persecution of citizens for exercising their digital rights, and uphold the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression.

The e-RIGHTS Project will continue to provide legal assistance and leverage all available legal avenues to ensure that justice is served and Mr. Agu's rights, and the rights of all citizens to freedom of expression, are upheld.

***Signed – Angela Uzoma-Iwuchukwu,
Country Director, Avocats Sans Frontières France.***

About the e-RIGHTS Project

The Enhancing Digital Rights in Nigeria (e-RIGHTS) Project is an initiative funded by the European Union and implemented by Avocats Sans Frontières France (ASF France) in partnership with the Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD), and Spaces for Change (S4C). The project aims to promote and protect digital rights and freedom of expression in Nigeria. The e-RIGHTS Project is providing pro-bono legal support to Chinedu Agu.