

JUDICIAL CORRUPTION IN NIGERIA: A MENACE TO DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

BY

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PROTOCOL

It is both a privilege and a responsibility to speak to you today on a topic that is at the heart of democratic governance in Nigeria. This topic is most apposite because many Nigerians have steadily lost confidence in the judicial system as it has been widely perceived as being riddled with corruption, inconsistency, and undue influence. Judicial corruption is a significant social malaise in Nigeria, affecting the judiciary, governance, and economic development. It erodes public trust in the legal system, leading to a culture of impunity and disillusionment among citizens. The judiciary, which ought to be the last hope of the common person, is increasingly seen as an arena where justice can be delayed, manipulated, or outrightly purchased by the highest bidder. This perception has not arisen in a vacuum; it is rooted in repeated instances and patterns of judicial misconduct that have played out in the public eye. This highlights the pervasive impact of judicial corruption on societal structures and the moral foundation of society.

1. **The United Nations Convention against Corruption, UNCAC** as it is generally called describes corruption as an insidious plague that has a wide range of corrosive effects on societies, and which undermines democracy and the rule of law, leads to violations of human rights, distorts markets, erodes the quality of life and allows organized crime, terrorism and other threats to human security to flourish. According to

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UNCAC This evil phenomenon is found in all countries—big and small, rich and poor—but it is in the developing world that its effects are most destructive. Corruption hurts the poor disproportionately by diverting funds intended for development, undermining a government’s ability to provide basic services, feeding inequality and injustice and discouraging foreign aid and investment. Corruption is a key element in economic underperformance and a major obstacle to poverty alleviation and development. The word “corruption” is not easily defined.

2. Corruption remains one of the most persistent obstacles to economic growth, democratic governance, and social development globally. The World Bank in its paper *Helping Countries Combat Corruption* (World Bank 2000), has identified corruption as “the single greatest obstacle to economic and social development,” noting that it distorts the rule of law and weakens the institutional foundations necessary for sustainable economic growth. As noted by former Supreme Court Justice Chukwudifu Oputa, corruption is the “greatest single bane” of Nigerian society, leading to favoritism and perversion of justice for monetary or political gains.
3. From time immemorial man has always been concerned about the seriousness of problems and threats posed by corruption to the stability and security of societies, undermining the institutions and values of democracy, ethical values and justice and jeopardizing sustainable development and the rule of law. Some say that corruption is as old as humans have inhabited the earth. To be able to decide disputes that may arise between persons different holy books advise against appointing corrupt persons as judges. In the Bible, the book of Deuteronomy Chapter 16, verse 18 – 20² admonishes us to: “Appoint judges and other official in every town that the Lord your God gives you.

² Goodnews Bible with Deuterocanonical Books/Apocrypha

These men are to judge the people impartially. They are not to be unjust or show impartiality in their judgments; and they are not to accept bribes, for gifts blind the eyes even of the wise and honest men and cause them to give wrong decisions. Always be fair and just, do that you will occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you and will continue to live there.

4. Likewise, the Holy Quran in Surat Nisaa Chapter IV verse 135, said that it was revealed to the Holy Prophet (SAW) as follows: “O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even though it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, be he rich or poor, Allah is a Better Protector to both. So follow not the lusts, lest you avoid justice; and if you distort your witness or refuse to give it, Allah is ever well ... acquainted with what you do”. Thus, those who judge are supposed to be above board like Caesar’s wife. They must not be susceptible to corruption. Corruption and other forms of crime, in particular judicial corruption, organized crime and economic crime, including money laundering, can be particularly damaging to democratic institutions, national economies and the rule of law.
5. In this paper I will focus on judicial corruption. Our Constitution declares in Section 36, that every person is entitled to a fair hearing by an independent and impartial court or tribunal. The topic therefore is of utmost importance as it seeks to address the judicial Corruption in Nigeria, considering it being a serious menace to democracy and social justice. **In A.G Ondo V A.G. Federation (2002) 10 NSCQR page 1034 at pages 1122-1123** the Supreme Court of Nigeria, confirmed that corrupt practices are a burning issue of great social concern in Nigeria. **In that case, the Court per Uthman Mohammed, JSC stated: ‘It is quite plain that the issue of corruption in Nigerian society has gone beyond our borders. It is no more a local affair. It is a national malaise that must be tackled by the Government of the Federal Republic. The disastrous consequences of the evil practice of**

corruption have taken this nation into the list of the most corrupt nations on earth’.

6. Dahiru Musdapher Chief Justice of Nigeria (as he then was) stated correctly at the SERAP Roundtable on 9th February 2012, in his keynote address, “When the rule of law is weak, corruption will remain a nagging problem.....Corruption in the Justice sector is a keystone to corruption throughout society. Without an honest criminal justice system, the wealthy, especially the corrupt, can escape the consequences of their crimes. Such impunity reduces the perceived cost of corruption. The risk that corrupt activity will result in imprisonment and accompanying public humiliation is minimal. The gains from corruption are therefore not discounted and there is thus little reason beyond personal integrity not to engage in corrupt acts.....**Metaphorically, a corrupt judge has been described as more harmful to the society than a man who runs amok with a dagger in a crowded street.** The latter as you know can be restrained physically. But the former deliberately destroys the moral foundation of society and causes incalculable distress to individuals while still answering “honourable”.
7. The Code of Conduct for Judicial Officers of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (the Code), recognizes, that an independent, strong, respected and respectable judiciary is indispensable for the impartial administration of Justice in a democratic State. It further states that it is the duty of every Judicial Officer to actively participate in establishing, maintaining, enforcing, and himself observing a high standard of conduct that will ensure and preserve transparently, the integrity and respect for the independence of the Judiciary. The Code in fact prohibits acceptance of gift, bequest, loan, favour, benefit, advantage, bribe etc by a judicial officer. Specifically, the Code stipulates that
10.li A Judge and members of the Judge’s family shall neither ask for, nor accept, any gift, bequest, loan or favour in relation to

anything done or to be done or omitted to be done by the Judge in connection with a performance of judicial duties.

10.lii. A Judge shall not knowingly permit Court staff or others subject to the Judge's influence, direction or authority, to ask for, or accept, any gift, bequest, loan or favour in relation to anything done, to be done or omitted to be done in connection with his or her duties or functions.

10.liii. A Judge shall not give or take and shall not encourage or condone the giving or taking of any benefit, advantage, bribe however disguised for anything done or to be done in the discharge of a judicial duty.

8. Despite the above stipulations judicial corruption in Nigeria remains a pervasive issue, undermining public trust in the legal system and hindering the administration of justice. It manifests in forms such as bribery, political interference, nepotism, and manipulation of court processes, often involving judges, lawyers, court staff, and litigants. Whatever form it takes, judicial corruption strikes at the very heart of the rule of law. Yet, when justice becomes a commodity traded in the shadows of chambers and corridors, when rulings are allegedly influenced by envelopes rather than evidence, when adjournments are engineered for personal gain rather than procedural necessity, then the judiciary ceases to be the last hope of the common man and becomes instead the first refuge of the powerful and the corrupt.
9. That corruption has eaten deep into the fabric of the legal profession and indeed into the administration of justice is a readily admitted fact. This has been variously admitted by the bar and the bench. On February 17, 2012, the then President of the Nigerian Bar Association, J.B. Daudu (SAN) accused senior lawyers and retired judicial officers in the country of aiding and abetting corruption in election petitions. He made the allegation while speaking at the valedictory session held in honour of the late Supreme Court Justice, Anthony Aniagolu. J. B. Daudu (SAN) specifically said some senior lawyers and retired judicial officers serve as bribe couriers between politicians and election petition tribunals. He did not name the senior lawyers and retired judges involved, but ear him: **"Sadly it is no longer a moot point that the corruption that encompassed the larger society has infiltrated the justice sector. I make no distinction here between the Bar and the Bench. Corruption is now a live issue that is threatening to tear apart the foundations and fabric of the society. We are no doubt aware that some of our colleagues including very senior counsel and at times**

eminent retired judicial officers go about offering their services as consultants particularly in election cases for incredible sums of money so as to act as conduit between their client and the election court. The end result is to facilitate ready-made justice for persons they are acting for. We must strongly deprecate this practice”.

10. It is profoundly disturbing, and indeed appalling, that more than a decade after these insightful observations were first articulated, judicial corruption in Nigeria not only persists but, in the view of many, has become even more entrenched. Despite the passage of time and the repeated calls for reform, the integrity of our judicial system continues to be undermined by practices that erode public confidence and betray the very principles we are sworn to uphold. The statistics are damning and persistent. According to the *2024 survey by United Nations Office on Drug and Crimes (UNODC) and the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS)*, Nigerian public officials received approximately N721 billion (about \$1.26 billion at the time) in cash bribes in 2023, with judges ranking among the top recipients.

11. According to Chatham House, “Corruption is central to Nigeria’s challenges with insecurity, injustice, inequality and poor public goods and services. Amid consistently low levels of public spending, the misappropriation of those scarce public funds is causing real harm to citizens. This situation is worsened by a weak and compromised judicial system that allows elites to insulate themselves from accountability³”. Continuing, the report noted that:

“Some 61 per cent of survey respondents believed that judges in Nigeria were likely to accept bribes to influence their rulings. These

³ “Tackling judicial bribery and procurement fraud in Nigeria: How harnessing public disapproval can enable collective action against corruption” - [Tackling judicial bribery and procurement fraud in Nigeria | Chatham House – International Affairs Think Tank](#) – accessed on February 6, 2026

expectations are further heightened by sociopolitical factors, political interference, the contested relationship between Nigeria's executive and judiciary, nepotism that contributes to a lack of transparency and merit in the appointment and elevation of judges to higher courts, and a culture of lobbying for position among judges. Existing judicial networks – the formal and informal ties that first connect judges to each other and to legal professionals and court officials – are believed to exert pressure on individual judges to fall in line with existing corrupt practices that undermine the rule of law and harm prospects for institutionalizing accountable governance⁴.

12. A separate ***Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC)*** survey from 2018-2020 estimated that around N9.4 billion was involved in bribes within the justice sector alone, with lawyers being the primary bribe-givers (27%), followed by litigants (22%) and court staff (22%). Foreign perception is equally damning, as a Chatham House study found that 61% of Nigerians believe judges are likely to accept bribes, exacerbated by sociopolitical factors like executive interference and a lack of transparency in judicial appointments. Additionally, according to ***Transparency International's 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index*** released in early 2025, Nigeria scored 26 out of 100, ranking 140th out of 180 countries. Surveys and citizen reports continue to show that a significant majority of Nigerians believe justice is for sale, especially in high-stakes political, electoral, and economic cases. In the light of these disturbing realities, it is evident that judicial corruption in Nigeria is no longer a matter of isolated misconduct but a deep-seated systemic challenge that threatens public confidence in the administration of justice.

⁴ Ibid

13. Democracy thrives on the rule of law. Elections, governance, accountability, and the peaceful resolution of disputes all depend on an independent and incorruptible judiciary. Judicial corruption is therefore a direct and insidious threat to democracy. When courts become instruments for shielding the corrupt or punishing political opponents, elections lose meaning, governance becomes arbitrary, and the social contract fractures. Citizens lose faith not only in judges but in the entire system of government. Investors flee, economic growth stalls, and insecurity thrives in the vacuum of trust.
14. Upon assumption of office as the Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Honourable Justice Kudirat Motonmori Olatokunbo Kekere-Ekun, GCON, Your Lordship made it clear that the Court's urgent task was restoring public confidence in the judiciary. Thus, the CJN has consistently reminded judges of their sacred oath. Addressing newly appointed judges Your Lordship urged them; thus, "Let your judgments be reasoned, impartial and courageous. The Judiciary, as the final arbiter of justice, depends on the credibility of its officers. Each of you now bears a share of that institutional burden – and of that honour".
15. The judiciary has equally made some efforts to address the negative perception of its work. Permit me to pause to note that to tackle judicial corruption, the National Judicial Council (NJC) has at various time recommended the suspension, dismissal or compulsorily retirement of judges for corrupt practices or age falsification and for gross misconduct. Such punitive actions follow hearing of petitions, and some say public outcry and investigations into the declining credibility of the judiciary. The NJC takes actions in disciplinary action by ensuring that erring judges are not shielded by influence or political prejudice. Through appointing specific investigating panels to deal with petitions within a stipulated time limit, the council offers transparency in disciplinary actions, allowing lawyers and the public to follow up on the status of misconduct complaints against judicial officers.

16. Despite these efforts, more work needs to be done about changing the negative perception of the judiciary which is best captured in the words of His Eminence, Sultan of Sokoto, Muhammadu Sa'ad Abubakar in his speech at the opening ceremony of the NBA Annual General Conference of August 2025 when he warned that **“Today, justice is increasingly becoming a purchasable commodity, and the poor are becoming victims of this kind of justice, while the rich commit all manner of crime and walk the streets scot-free”**. The Sultan’s speech once more reminds us that perception is greater than reality and that “with reality there is not much room to maneuver, with perception we can exaggerate or modify according to the need”. The Sultan’s statement that the rich evade accountability while the integrity of the judicial system is being undermined by corruption and inequality once more reminds us that perception is greater than reality. As we always say, “with reality there is not much room to maneuver, with perception we can exaggerate or modify according to the need”.
17. Public confidence in the judiciary may have plummeted, but we can reverse many of the negative perceptions of the judiciary. We must, therefore, renew our focus on access to justice for indigent citizens, speedy trial of cases, and regular inspection of detention facilities to curb unlawful incarceration. The judiciary is not an ivory tower immune from the gaze of the people; it is an institution that must constantly earn public trust through fairness, timeliness, and transparency. No judiciary can command respect if questions persist about the discipline and integrity of its officers. The National Judicial Council (NJC) must be unwavering in upholding ethical standards, while at the same time protecting judicial independence from political interference.
18. As Mohammed Lawal Uwais GCON, CJN (of blessed memory) once said, “for a judiciary to function effectively, it must have the trust and confidence of the people.” This trust will be strengthened only when judges are seen to be above reproach, and when disciplinary

processes are swift, fair, and transparent. May I recall the words of Justice Taslim Elias: “Justice is the greatest concern of man on earth.” Our collective duty is to ensure that justice is not a distant ideal but a daily reality for all Nigerians.

19. Whenever the course of justice is perverted or judgments are corruptly obtained, it assaults social justice by striking most cruelly at the poor and the vulnerable. The poor farmer whose land is grabbed by the influential, the widow denied her inheritance, the victim of police brutality seeking redress, these are the voiceless who suffer most when justice tilts toward money and connections. When justice is delayed, manipulated, or denied due to corrupt practices, the rule of law becomes an illusion. Fundamental rights lose meaning, contracts become uncertain, and lawful enterprise is discouraged. Social justice cannot flourish where access to justice is determined by influence rather than merit. In such circumstances, the law ceases to be a shield for the weak and becomes a weapon for the strong. A compromised judiciary, therefore, does not merely delay justice; it denies it, perpetuating inequality and breeding resentment that can erupt into unrest.
20. In addition to these damning effects, Judicial Corruption has international repercussions. Foreign courts, such as those in the UK, have bypassed Nigerian judiciary in cases involving oil spills and arbitration awards, citing systemic delays and unreliability. This was seen in ***Okpabi and Others v Royal Dutch Shell Plc and another [2021] UKSC 3*** where the UK Supreme Court held that the ***Ogale and Bille*** communities in the Niger Delta could pursue legal claims in English courts against Royal Dutch Shell Plc and its Nigerian subsidiary for environmental damage caused by oil spills, on the basis that there was a good arguable case that the UK-based parent company owed a duty of care over harms linked to its Nigerian operations. This judgment overturned earlier lower-court decisions and allowed the case to

proceed in the UK because the claimants argued that they were unlikely to obtain effective justice in Nigerian courts.

21. Another glaring example can be seen in the ***P&ID arbitration saga***, where a London-seated arbitration award against Nigeria arising from a gas contract, initially made in 2017, was set aside by the UK High Court in October 2023, despite the fact that Enforcement Procedure had already been put in place, on grounds that the award had been procured by fraud.

What then can be done?

22. The fight against judicial corruption in Nigeria cannot be won without the active, principled, and collective commitment of lawyers, judges, and the citizens of Nigeria, who occupy central positions in the administration of justice. It is only through a shared commitment to integrity that the legal profession can dismantle entrenched corrupt practices, restore public trust, and ensure that justice in Nigeria is administered fairly, impartially, and in accordance with the rule of law. In the United States of America, where a judicial officer is charged with a criminal offence he must be placed on suspension. This is a laudable action because a judge must have a high moral authority and must live above board. So, where a judicial officer is under investigation for prima facie judicial misconduct or alleged judicial corruption, NJC or the appropriate authority should place such subject judicial officer on suspension because his integrity, morale and status as a judex is at stake.

The Role Of The Judiciary in Combating Corruption

23. Much has already been written on this subject; however, I find the views articulated by ***Tayo Oyetibo, SAN***, in his paper titled “*The Role of the Judiciary in Combating Corruption in Nigeria*,” presented at the SERAP Media Roundtable on Magistrates’ Courts Ethics, Integrity,

and Improving Citizens' Access to Justice, particularly compelling and profoundly relevant. I therefore consider it appropriate to reproduce those views here and expressly adopt them as my own. He stated thus:

There is no doubt that the fight against corruption in Nigeria is a collective one and all hands must be on deck to win the battle. As the saying goes, "it takes two to tango." Where there is no "offeror" they can be no "offeree". In other words, corruption persists and reigns supreme in Nigeria because persons in authority have either been corrupted by the system or by the people they come in contact with. If the people unanimously choose not to influence the work of public officers, indeed, the corrupt public officers cannot continue to operate without being exposed. Therefore, there are "corruptors" and "corruptees".

24. Judicial officers are expected to conduct proceedings transparently, deliver well-reasoned and timely judgments, and adhere strictly to ethical codes and disciplinary standards. They must resist all forms of inducement, political influence, and external pressure, recognizing that even the perception of bias or impropriety undermines the legitimacy of the courts. According to ***The Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Justice Kudirat Kekere-Ekun*** in her speech delivered on the 10th of February 2025, while declaring open the 2025 hybrid refresher course for judges of superior courts, the onus is on the Judiciary to confront these challenges of Judicial corruption head-on and reaffirm the commitment to judicial excellence. In her words, "*Without public confidence, the judiciary's moral authority is diminished, and its ability to discharge its constitutional mandate is impaired*". Reiterating the importance of judicial impartiality, the CJN cautioned that even the perception of bias or misconduct could be as

damaging as the reality itself. *“It is not enough to be impartial; we must also be seen to be impartial.”*

25. It is imperative that the Judiciary upholds the Code of Conduct for Judicial Officers with unwavering fidelity. You must reject every inducement, no matter how subtle or disguised, and report misconduct, whether by colleagues, court staff, or lawyers, swiftly and fearlessly to the National Judicial Council (NJC). Judicial officers must embrace transparency and resist external pressures, whether political, familial, or financial, while taking cognizance of the fact that your independence is not a privilege but a public trust.

26. Additionally, there are external factors and mechanisms which must be put in place for them to enhance the judiciary’s ability to perform its role in combating corruption in Nigeria. These include:

(i) **Independence:** For the Judiciary to play its role in the fight against corruption it must be independent and free from any form of interference or influence in terms of funding, political manipulation e.t.c. This will enable Judges to determine cases freely and competently based on facts presented before them and nothing more.

(ii) The Courts must ensure that cases bordering on corruption are dealt with expeditiously to instil public confidence in the fight against corruption. To this end, the court must ensure that recourse to unnecessary technicalities are avoided or outrightly rejected

(iii) **Competence of Judges:** The fight against corruption will indeed be more effective when Judges are properly trained, better motivated, disciplined and committed to duty. The need for Judges to be better trained to handle (corruption) cases cannot be over-emphasised. Thus, his Lordship SAULAWA,

JCA, stated this fact clearly in a paper delivered at the Commonwealth Legal Education Association Conference on congestion of cases in Nigerian Courts on 28th -30th November 2000 thus:

“It is not in doubt that the nature of the office and functions of a judge call for a very high sense of duty, probity, integrity and transparency, as such any Judge so appointed, without possessing the above fundamental qualities, is no doubt bound to be a clog and obstacle to justice. As someone would say, “a Judge with little or no learning can be a most dangerous clog in the administration of justice.”

- (iv) **Incorruptibility of the Bench:** A corrupt bench can only worsen the fight against corruption. For the Judiciary to position itself properly against the fight against corruption, it must first purge itself of corruption.
- (v) The prosecuting agencies must provide proper training for prosecutors of corruption cases.
- (vi) The courts must be properly equipped with modern facilities to be able to fast-track the determination of corruption related cases and indeed understand the modus operandi of persons accused of cases of corruption.

THE ROLE OF THE CITIZENS

27. Active citizen engagement is therefore essential to safeguarding the integrity of the justice system. Citizens must refuse to participate in corrupt practices. Judicial corruption often thrives through everyday interactions, which include offers of bribes to influence outcomes, the use of intermediaries to “fix” cases, or the expectation that justice

must be paid for. By rejecting these practices, even when they appear expedient, you and I can help to dismantle the demand side of corruption and affirm that justice should be based on merit and the rule of law.

28. We also have a duty to report acts of judicial misconduct. Mechanisms exist within the National Judicial Council, the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee, anti-corruption agencies, and civil society organizations for lodging complaints and petitions, and we must raise awareness and engage in public education and advocacy, through civil society organizations, the media, and community groups and **associations such as this**. By raising awareness of citizens' rights, court procedures, and ethical standards expected of judicial officers, we can empower the public to identify and challenge corrupt practices.
29. Furthermore, we must actively engage in democratic and reform processes. Supporting judicial reforms, demanding transparency in judicial appointments and disciplinary proceedings, and holding elected officials accountable for strengthening the justice sector are critical ways citizens can influence long-term change. An informed and engaged electorate is a powerful check against institutional decay.

30. Proposed Reforms

The prospects of effective justice delivery will be enhanced if we can implement these recommendations some which were made by the NBA.

- a. To improve judicial professionalism, the issue of judicial appointments must be addressed. To help improve the professionalism of judges, the use of a state-by-state judicial academy whose mission would be to select new judges and train them should be considered. The present system of having a

National Judicial Institute for the training of judges in Nigeria has not achieved the desired results. It would also appear that the idea of having a large number of judges in an auditorium for purposes of 'training' them is not as productive as it should be. The training modules for judges should be developed for use in training smaller number of judges within their respective states.

- b. Judicial appointments process should be reformed to focus on skill professional and technical ability, in addition to integrity and personality. The proposed state by state judicial academy will play an important role in measuring and developing these skills.
- c. The Federal and State governments should ensure that the constitutional financial autonomy given to the judiciary is given effect so as to avoid such adverse effects as 'poor and inadequate judicial infrastructure, low morale among judicial personnel, alleged corruption in the judiciary, delays in administration of justice and judicial services delivery and general low quality and poor out-put by the judiciary'
- d. The Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN) shall no longer appoint some other members of the NJC.
- e. The provisions of Paragraph (i) 20 (i) of the Third Schedule, Part 1 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) which preclude all NBA nominees on the NJC from dealing with judicial matters other than appointments into the superior courts of record (i.e. only one item out of thirteen) is certainly discriminatory and unwarranted and should be outrightly amended. (*After all Judges play prominent role in the disciplining of lawyers*);
- f. As a result of over concentration of powers in the office of the Chief Justice of Nigeria by the 1999 Constitution, the CJN should cease to be the Chairman of the NJC and all other similar constitutional and statutory bodies;
- g. Any suitable Nigerian with requisite experience, impeccable records of service and competence (like a retired Justice of the Supreme Court, former President of the NBA, Professor of Law, or any legal practitioner etc) could be appointed as Chairman for only one term of five years;

- h. Appointments into the Bench at whatever level, the Higher Bench especially, must henceforth be predicated upon merit and the recommendation of the Bar. This is to ensure that only quality people are elevated as Judicial Officers and that corruption is reduced to the barest minimum.
- i. Those who apply for appointment as judicial officers especially the High Courts, Federal High Court and National Industrial Court be subjected to written tests conducted by an independent body. The results of such exam should be published within 6 (six) hours of the completion of the same.
- j. Successive leadership of the judiciary should be trained on leadership, supervision, delegation, mentoring, coaching and human resource management as well as to ensure that relationships between Bench & Bar as well as amongst judicial officers are characterized by mutual respect, dignity, tolerance, civility, discretion, good humour, maturity, calmness, wisdom, transparency, tolerance and propriety, hallmarks of the esteemed learned profession;
- k. The assignment of cases to judges should be automated to ensure that all civil and criminal actions are assigned by a random selection process to ensure equitable distribution of caseload and avoid judge shopping. Each court should have a written plan or system for assigning cases. The method should provide for assignment of cases to judges who have special expertise in some areas of law. The benefit of this system is that it takes advantage of the expertise developed by judges in certain areas. Courts also have a system to check if there is any conflict that would make it improper for a judge to preside over a particular case. Where an automated system is used a judge should be able to carry out such conflict-check and return any case he/she may have a conflict in.
- l. The Bar and the Bench must show mutual respect so that the administration of justice would not be jeopardized.
- m. All levels of government in Nigeria must ensure the independence of the judiciary.
- n. The Courts must ensure that cases bordering on corruption, financial and economic crimes, violation of human rights are

dealt with expeditiously to instill public confidence in the fight against corruption. To this end, the court must ensure that recourse to unnecessary technicalities are avoided or outrightly rejected.

- o. The Rule of Law must prevail in Nigeria, and the NBA shall keep a vigilant watch to ensure this at all times.
- p. Acquisition of IT skills by Lawyers, Judges, Litigants, Court Officers (i.e. Clerks, Registrars) and other stakeholders must be made mandatory. In doing this, it is essential to incorporate acquisition of information communication technology (ICT) into various programs organized both by the Nigerian Bar and the bench. This is achievable, for instance, through the inclusion of same as one of the courses to be taken during the mandatory continuing legal education. The electronic system should also be user friendly, that is, it should not be cumbersome to operate. This can be done by putting in place online help centers that will help in providing answers to frequently asked questions.
- q. The issue of network dysfunction should be addressed by making the service providers more effective. The regulatory body, particularly the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) is in the position to monitor the activities of the service providers by putting up a robust mechanism to keep them on their toes. Security in form of encryption keys can be provided to restrict access to courts' website. Powerful antivirus software can be put in place to prevent virus attack.
- r. There is need for amendment of various laws and courts' rules to accommodate electronic method in conducting activities in courts: filing and services of processes as well as hearing of matters and applications. A lot can be learnt from South Korea and other developed countries which have fully embraced electronic method. At this point, I will not fail to commend the efforts of the drafters of the new Court of Appeal Rules (2021) for including electronic filing and electronic transmission of records of appeal in the new rules in order to encourage the use of ICT in the swift delivery of justice. Electronic method can be made less expensive, by way of financial incentives, which will attract people to adopt the system. In Korea, court fees were cut by 10% for lawyers who use electronic filing. Although lawyers and court officers who are fond of unwholesome practices and benefit from

vices associated with the conventional method may be reluctant in towing this path. To prevent abuse of the method, the users should be provided with accreditation number having registered online and obtained personal identification number (PIN), which can be renewable upon payment of annual practicing fee as prescribed by the Nigerian Bar Association and/or relevant regulatory bodies This will lay to rest the argument on whether or not court's archives can be accessible by every tom and harry.

- s. The prosecuting agencies must provide proper training for investigators and prosecutors of corruption cases.
- t. The courts must be properly equipped with modern facilities to be able to fast-track the determination of corruption related cases and indeed understand the modus operandi of persons accused of cases of corruption.

CONCLUSION

31. The hope of the common man will continue to wane in the justice delivery system if we do not fix it. Combating judicial corruption is essential for restoring public faith in the legal framework and ensuring a fair and equitable justice. The Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) states on its website that its mission is to rid Nigeria of corruption through lawful enforcement and preventive. The Commission envisions a Nigeria free from corruption and corrupt practices. The mission of the ICPC sums up the role of the law enforcement agencies in the fight against corruption. The agencies are not only trying to detect the commission of offences but must strive to prevent their corruption.
32. Religious organisations and traditional institutions also have a crucial role to play. They should equal carry out and sustain rigorous public enlightenment campaign against economic and financial crimes within and outside Nigeria. They should neither give a place of honour to individuals whose wealth are of doubtful origin nor confer them with titles. They should speak out and condemn corruption and

corrupt practices. They should not celebrate those who have plundered our national resource. They must ensure that they are given a place of dishonour in their organisations or institutions.

33. The traditional institutions and religious organisations must not only declare zero tolerance from corruption, but they must also indeed uphold lifestyles that attest to that. They must be shining examples of the standard expected of a society that wants to eliminate corruption. They must also refuse donations from persons whose lifestyle cannot be attributed to their legitimate income.
34. This fight must continue relentlessly, transparently, and without compromise. Judicial corruption is not merely a legal problem; it is a moral crisis and a democratic emergency. The survival of our democracy and the promise of social justice depend on the courage, integrity, and collective resolve of the Bar and the Bench. History will judge us not by our eloquence, but by our willingness to act. The War against Judicial Corruption is an enduring obligation that demands vigilance, courage, and collective resolve from the Bar, the Bench, and all stakeholders in the justice sector, including the Citizens. The credibility of our democracy, the protection of fundamental rights, and the attainment of social justice depend on an incorruptible judiciary that commands public trust. We must therefore remain unwavering in our determination to cleanse the temple of justice, restore faith in the rule of law, and ensure that justice in Nigeria is not only done, but manifestly seen to be done.

Thanks for Listening.

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February 6, 2026.

