



**NATIONAL JUDICIAL COUNCIL,
SUPREME COURT COMPLEX,
THREE ARMS ZONE,
CENTRAL DISTRICT,
P.M.B. 483,
ABUJA - NIGERIA.**

PRESS RELEASE

14 May 2026

- **NJC recommends 12 new Justices of the Court of Appeal, adopts policy on eligibility of retired public servants for judicial appointment**
- **Extends appointment of Hon. Justice Ijeoma Agugua as Imo State Acting CJ**
- **Rejects appeal petitions of eight compulsorily retired Imo judges**
- **Reinstates Hon. Justice Nze of the Imo State Customary Court of Appeal**
- **Suspends two judges for one year without pay**
- **Dismisses 73 petitions for lacking in merit**
- **Commends nine judges, queries 256 others**

The National Judicial Council (NJC), at its 111th Meeting held on 13 May 2026, under the Chairmanship of the Honourable, the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Hon. Justice Kudirat Motonmori Olatokunbo Kekere-Ekun, GCON, has recommended the appointment of twelve (12) new Justices of the Court of Appeal to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

The Council also recommended one candidate for appointment as Judge of the High Court of Benue State and two candidates for appointment as Kadis of the Sharia Court of Appeal, Katsina State.

These recommendations are intended to fill vacancies arising from the elevation and retirement of Judicial Officers across various levels of the Judiciary and to strengthen the capacity of courts for effective justice delivery.

- i. Hon. Justice Yakubu, Abdulhammeed Mohammed
- ii. Hon. Justice Abodunde, Monisola Oluwatoyin
- iii. Hon. Justice Ajuwa, Raphael
- iv. Hon. Justice Abua, Elias Ojie
- v. Hon. Justice Ijohor, Mbalamen Jennifer
- vi. Hon. Justice Shuaibu, Sabiu Bala
- vii. Hon. Justice Omotosho, James Kolawole
- viii. Hon. Justice Nwite, Emeka
- ix. Hon. Justice Buba, Dauda Njane
- x. Hon. Justice Kado, Sanusi
- xi. Hon. Justice Ademola, Enikuomehin
- xii. Hon. Justice Dadom, Julcit Veronica

Benue State High Court

- i. Christine T. Clement Ende

Sharia Court of Appeal, Katsina State

- i. Ibrahim Abdullahi Yakubu
- ii. Bala Salisu Daura

The consideration of Messrs. Yakubu and Daura had earlier been stepped down in January 2026 following a petition received from Tanimu Yusuf dated 20 November, 2025, questioning their eligibility on account of prior retirement from public service. After due examination of the issues raised, the Council concluded its deliberations and approved their recommendation.

The NJC stated that all recommendations followed a rigorous selection process involving public scrutiny, evaluation of complaints received from stakeholders, and interviews conducted by a nine-member Interview Committee, in accordance with the 2023 Revised NJC Guidelines and Procedural Rules for the Appointment of Judicial Officers.

The NJC reaffirmed that the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) does not prohibit retired public servants from judicial appointment. The decision was further guided by judicial precedent, particularly *Ayoola v. Baruwa (1999)*, where the Court of Appeal affirmed that no constitutional provision precludes a retired legal practitioner from appointment to the Bench.

Under the newly adopted policy:

- A retired public servant must have a minimum of ten (10) years remaining in service before attaining the mandatory judicial retirement age;
- Prospective candidates must disclose any criminal conviction;
- Provide full employment history and reasons for leaving previous employment;
- Declare existing employment obligations; and
- Disclose financial status, including any circumstance of financial embarrassment.

The Council noted that public service retirement may occur through voluntary retirement, compulsory retirement, or advised resignation, and observed that some officers retire upon attaining 50 years of age after completing 35 years of service.

The requirement of a minimum remaining service period was introduced to ensure optimal institutional investment in judicial training and to promote continuity, stability, and efficiency within the Judiciary.

The Council extended the acting appointment of Hon. Justice Ijeoma O. Agugua as Acting Chief Judge of Imo State for a further period of three (3) months with effect from 26 March 2026 – 26 June 2026 to

allow for completion of the process for appointing a substantive Chief Judge.

The NJC commended Hon. Justice Ononeze-Madu for declining to be sworn in contrary to established constitutional procedure, describing the action as a demonstration of institutional integrity and respect for the rule of law.

The Council reiterated its call on the Imo State Judicial Service Commission to expedite the process of appointment of a substantive Chief Judge in order to ensure stability, safeguard judicial independence, and enhance the effective administration of justice in the State.

On disciplinary matters, the Council rejected appeals filed by eight judges of the Imo State Judiciary seeking a reversal of their compulsory retirement from service over age falsification.

The Council found that the affected Judges failed to present fresh evidence capable of justifying a reversal of the sanctions imposed on them.

The Judges include Hon. Justice B.C. Iheka, Hon. Justice K. A. Leaweanya, Hon. Justice Okereke Chinyere Ngozi, Hon. Justice Innocent Chidi Ibeawuchi, Hon. Justice Ofoha Uchenna, Hon. Justice Everyman Eleanya, Hon. Justice Rosemond Ibe and Hon. Justice T. N. Nzeukwu.

However, the Council reinstated Hon. Justice T. I. Nze of the Customary Court of Appeal after His Lordship presented new evidence to the review committee which the committee found to be authentic.

The affected Judges were among 10 Judicial Officers recommended for compulsory retirement at the Council's 109th meeting held on 25 June 2025.

Nine of them were found to have altered their dates of birth in official records to unlawfully extend their years in service, while Justice T. N. Nzeukwu was found to have made himself available to be sworn in as Acting Chief Judge despite being fourth in the hierarchy of Judges, contrary to Section 271(4) of the Constitution.

The Council also considered 13 investigation reports on petitions filed against Judicial Officers across the country over the handling of cases before them.

Following deliberations, the NJC dismissed 8 petitions for lack of merit, want of diligent prosecution or for being time barred, while sanctions including one-year suspension without pay were imposed in 2 cases where misconduct was established.

Specifically, the Council suspended Hon. Justice Ibrahim D. Shekarau of the High Court of Nasarawa State for one year without pay for judicial misconduct involving the grant of an ex parte order in breach of Rules 3.1, 3.3 and 3.5 of the Revised Code of Conduct for Judicial Officers of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2016.

The suspension followed a petition by Oluwafunke Obale Ozozoma over proceedings in Suit No. NSD/MG56M/2025.

The petitioner alleged Hon. Justice Shekarau of granted an ex parte order directing the transfer of N7 million from her bank account to a third party third party as a purported reversal of funds. She contended that the ex parte application was filed, heard, and granted on the same day without any substantive suit pending before the Court, and that the order wrongly implied her involvement in fraud despite her not being charged or made a party to the proceedings. She further alleged that the Judge failed to verify the alleged erroneous transfer before making the order, thereby amounting to judicial misconduct.

The committee found that the Judge acted in bad faith, failed to observe due process and demonstrated lack of professional competence.

Similarly, the Council suspended Hon. Justice Edward A. E. Okpe of the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory for one year without pay over allegations of breach of fair hearing in a matrimonial case.

The decision followed a petition filed by Mr. Sunday Emmanuel Oso, who accused the Judge of bias and denial of fair hearing in Suit No. FCT/HC/PET/529/2024 between Lateefat Adeola Oso and Sunday Emmanuel Oso.

In the petition, Oso alleged that although he was served hearing notices fixing the matter for September 19, 2024, the court heard and granted an ex-parte application on September 17, 2024 without notice to him.

He further alleged that when the matter later came up, the judge declined to hear the Motion on Notice and instead entertained committal proceedings against him based on alleged disobedience of the earlier ex-parte order.

The committee found that Hon. Justice Okpe granted an ex parte application that led to committal proceedings against the petitioner without affording him the opportunity to be heard, contrary to Rule 3.3 of the Revised Code of Conduct for Judicial Officers.

In another case, the Council dismissed a petition filed against Hon. Justice Charles N. Wali of the Rivers State High Court over allegations of misconduct linked to the Rivers State House of Assembly crisis.

The NJC found that the allegations were unsubstantiated and recommended that the petitioner, Daniel Chibuzor Amadi Esq., be referred to the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee for disciplinary action over allegations described as reckless and unsupported by evidence.

The Council also deliberated on the report of 98 petitions submitted by its Preliminary Complaints Assessment Committees.

Out of the petitions considered, 68 were dismissed for lack of merit, four Judges were cautioned, one judge received final warning, while 11 petitions were recommended for further investigation.

The Council further adopted reports suspending proceedings in some petitions on the grounds that the matters were *sub judice*.

Council also resolved to refer one Mbadiwe Ossai to the Inspector-General of Police for investigation and prosecution for alleged perjury while Adeboye Williams Adewale, Esq.; Dr. Peter N. Ekemezie, Esq.; Dr. Martin Odika, Esq.; and Muhammad Hamza Ahmad-Gana, Esq.; were referred to the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee for writing frivolous and unsubstantiated petitions calculated to harass and intimidate Judicial Officers.

In a related development, one Yusuf Isa, a serial petitioner, was barred from further presenting petitions to the Council.

On judicial performance evaluation, the NJC commended nine Judges for exemplary performance during the 2024 and 2025 legal years.

Two Judges are to receive letters of commendation for delivering more than 21 considered judgments within the review period, while seven others will receive appreciation letters for commendable performance.

The Council also approved the issuance of 256 letters to judicial officers for various performance-related issues.

The Council approved the retirement of the following Judicial Officers:

- i. Hon. Justice Hamma Akawu Barka — Court of Appeal, Abuja Division, retired on 17 April 2026.

- ii. Hon. Justice Amina Audi Wambai — Court of Appeal, Makurdi Division, will retire on 6 July 2026.
- iii. Hon. Justice Bello Mohammed Shinkafi — High Court of Zamfara State, will retire voluntarily on 31 July 2026.

The NJC expressed profound appreciation for their dedicated and meritorious service to the Judiciary and the nation.

Council regretted the deaths of three judicial officers between 12 December 2025 and 1 April 2026.

- i. Hon. Justice Godswill Vidal Obomanu — High Court, Rivers State
- ii. Hon. Justice Bamidele Folarinle Adeyeye — High Court, Ondo State
- iii. Hon. Justice Yahaya Adamu — High Court, Kogi State

The National Judicial Council extends its heartfelt condolences to their families, the Judiciary, and the entire Nigerian legal community, and prays for the peaceful repose of their souls.


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D.D., Information