

**SPECIAL REPORT BY NBA SPIDEL CHAIRMAN, DR. M. O. UBANI ON THE
INVASION OF THE HOME OF JUSTICE MARY ODILI, JUSTICE OF THE
SUPREME COURT OF NIGERIA.**

INTRODUCTION

This is a report of my investigation of the invasion of the home of Honourable Justice Mary Odili, Justice of the Supreme Court of Nigeria, by persons suspected to be security operatives on Friday, October 29, 2021.

This came on the heels of my appointment by the President of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Mr. Olumide Akpata as a Special Investigator to enquire into the invasion with a view to identifying the perpetrators in order to bring them to justice as well as make recommendations to prevent a recurrence.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On the 29th of October, 2021 just as the Nigerian Bar Association was rounding off its Annual General Conference in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, there was a news break that some security operatives allegedly from the Nigerian Army, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Department of State Services (DSS), and the Nigerian Police among others had invaded the Abuja home of Hon. Justice Mary Odili, Justice of the Supreme Court of Nigeria.

The entire country was outraged by the incident, moreso against the backdrop of a similar midnight raid on the homes of several judges including two Supreme Court justices in 2016.

Instructively, no investigation was carried out in relation to the earlier raids. The judicial arm of government is such an important arm, especially for the jurisprudential development of the nation's legal system. Accordingly, under no circumstance should the Judiciary be permitted to be subjected to intimidation or harassment in the course of performing its constitutional duties.

Based on the foregoing, I set out to execute my mandate as the NBA Special Investigator. Suffice it to say that I interacted with almost all the *dramatis personae* in the invasion saga except the suspects and the Nigeria Police which did not accord me an audience after repeated efforts. Among those I interviewed in the course of the investigation were the Chief Justice of Nigeria; the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Mr. Abubakar Malami SAN; the victim, Hon. Justice Mary Peter-Odili; the Chief Judge of High Court of FCT, and the Chief Magistrate who issued the search warrant that set the invasion in motion, His Honour Emmanuel Iyanna. While I was unable to assess the suspects as they were already in custody, I was able to obtain their extra-judicial statements which gave significant insights into their roles in the matter.

Having reviewed all the oral and documentary evidence relating to the matter, I am of the firm view that the unwholesome invasion was driven by greed and the quest for financial gain by the ring leaders.

While the Chief Magistrate who issued the search warrant displayed commendable diligence in seeking requisite documentation prior to endorsing the warrant, his momentary lapse of vigilance led to his inability to identify manifest discrepancies in the information provided by the invaders. On the contrary, the sagacity displayed by Hon. Justice Njideka Nwosu-Iheme and Hon. Justice Peter-Odili's Chief Security Officer effectively thwarted the invasion.

It is recommended that substantive and procedural laws with elaborate processes and procedures for the issuance of search warrants, arrest warrants, detention orders, extension of detention orders among others should be enacted for the States and the Federal Government to obviate a repeat of this worrisome incident. The independence of the Judiciary must be sustained through administrative, operational and financial autonomy. Government entities that harbour criminal gangs must be brought to justice. On its part, the NBA must continue to press for obedience to court orders and respect for the rule of law until all arms of government adopt these as core values.

THE MANDATE

Consistent with his proactive leadership since assuming the mantle of leadership as the President of the Nigerian Bar Association, Mr. Olumide Akpata rose to the occasion by issuing a Press Statement wherein he condemned the siege laid by the alleged security operatives on the Abuja home of Hon. Justice Mary Odili.

He rightly described the act as an ***"affront on the judiciary, designed to intimidate and ridicule the judiciary."***

The NBA President also outlined other measures to deal with the issue, including the convening of an emergency meeting of NBA National Executive Council (NBA-NEC). Mr. Akpata also promised to lead a delegation to the Attorney General of the Federation, Mr. Abubakar Malami SAN and heads of various security agencies to seek further clarification on the incident with a view to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Following the emergency meeting held in Abuja, the NBA-NEC mandated the President to take all necessary steps to bring the perpetrators to justice. It was on the basis of this resolution that the President appointed me as a SPECIAL INVESTIGATOR to interface with all relevant persons connected with the incident including but not limited to His Lordship, Hon. Justice Mary Odili; the Chief Magistrate who issued the controversial Search Warrant; the Chief Judge of the FCT High Court who exercises supervisory jurisdiction over the said Chief Magistrate; the Honourable Attorney General of the Federation in whose office the officials who carried out the invasion were purportedly domiciled, as well as the Inspector General of Police whose alleged officers attempted to execute the search warrant.

I am glad to report that I got the much needed co-operation from all the dramatis personae except the Inspector General of Police who neither replied to our letter nor responded to our calls for an interface.

THE INVESTIGATION

In the course of my investigation, I visited the office of the Attorney General of the Federation who was willing to explain his side of the story.

I also visited the Hon. Justice Mary Odili JSC. His Lordship expressed her gratitude to the NBA for its proactive stance over the incident. She narrated her experience and the trauma she was subjected to on the day of the incident. Her Chief Security Officer and daughter also gave vivid accounts of the ill-fated invasion.

My next port of call was the offices of the Chief Judge of the Federal Capital Territory and the Chief Magistrate who issued the order. I also paid a visit to the Chief Justice of Nigeria who expressed shock over the invasion. It is on record that the Chief Justice of Nigeria had while speaking at an event to mark the 2021/2022 Legal Year, described the invasion as embarrassing, adding that

"no one, irrespective of his or her status or position in the country, should test our will because the consequences of such unwarranted provocation will be too dire to bear." The Chief Justice of Nigeria concluded that "We are making efforts now to ensure that henceforth, every search or arrest warrant must be issued with the

knowledge and approval of the Chief Judge of the respective States or Federal High Court as the case may be."

The Nigerian Police was reported to have arrested several persons including lawyers, security agents, a journalist and other professionals that allegedly carried out the invasion. The arrested persons were arraigned on 15th December, 2021. They all pleaded **“Not Guilty”** to the charges preferred against them. The first hearing on the case was held on 17th January, 2022 when the first prosecution witness gave evidence and was cross-examined. The matter was adjourned to 1st March, 2022 and further adjourned to 8th April, 2022 as the court did not sit on 1st March, 2022. The NBA will be holding a watching brief on the matter at the next adjourned date. One Barrister Maxwell Okpara of NBA Bwari Branch has been engaged to work with the Special Investigator/NBA SPIDEL Chairman on the case by holding a watching brief on behalf of the NBA.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

As regards my role as NBA Special Investigator, my responsibility, as I understood it, was to independently investigate the invasion and report to the NBA on the outcome of my enquiries.

I was mandated to apply and obtain, where necessary on behalf of the Association, such information and materials as may be reasonably required to carry out the assignment including deploying the Freedom of Information Act. I was also mandated to co-opt members of the Association who may assist me to carry out the assignment.

To underscore the importance of the assignment, I was reminded by the President vide the Letter of Appointment that the Bar and indeed the generality of Nigerians were counting on me to discharge this onerous responsibility timeously and painstakingly.

MY FINDINGS

The starting point for me was the judicial process that was used to activate the entire invasion. The Search Warrant that purportedly set the invasion in motion was issued and signed by His Honour, Emmanuel Iyanna of Wuse Zone 6 Magisterial Division, Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. I applied and secured all the certified court documents that were used to activate the invasion. The process leading to the invasion was activated by the deposition of a purported whistle-blower, one Mr. Aliyu Umar Ibrahim whose address on record is at No. 9, Maigoro Street, Niger State.

May I quickly note that the address of the whistle-blower should have raised a red flag for any meticulous individual dealing with this issue. Firstly, he does not reside in Abuja and so could not sufficiently make any claim in respect of a matter that is alleged to be happening in Abuja. Secondly, his address on record is vague, with no specific description of where he is residing in Niger State. This should again have further put any person acting on his averment on enquiry.

Equally noteworthy is that in the second paragraph of his affidavit, instead of maintaining “**Aliyu Umar Ibrahim**” which was his stated name as the Deponent, he curiously changed his name to “**Danjuma Ibrahim.**”

This gives an impression of two persons swearing to the same affidavit. This again should have put anyone on enquiry.

More bizarre is the content of his affidavit. Same is reproduced below:

"I, Danjuma Ibrahim have observed some illegal activities to be (sic) going on in some houses within Abuja and it's (sic) environs.

"I am sure and convince (sic) that the kind of activities going on in those houses within Abuja are illegal and hereby report the said matter to the law enforcement agency.

"I hereby state that all information provided by me to the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) are true and correct to the best of my knowledge".

The two key issues that were concerning about the content of this affidavit were

"illegal activities going on in some houses within Abuja and its environs" and the information provided "by me to the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) are true and correct to the best of my knowledge".

An assertion of illegal activities going on in some houses without mentioning the said house or address to it should also raise a red flag to a discerning mind and be subjected to further scrutiny,

On the second issue, it is obvious that the alleged whistle-blower's disclosure was made to the EFCC and not to any other security agency or Ministry. The flip side is that the affidavit is a 'standard form' affidavit that has been used for many other operations in the past by a syndicate purporting to be officials of the Federal Ministry of Justice or Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

Mr. Ibrahim's affidavit was sworn on 13th October, 2021 and on 28th October, 2021 CSP Lawrence Ajodo with alleged Force AP No: 201192 swore to another affidavit wherein he stated that he was attached to the Joint Panel Recovery, Ministry of Justice. Mr. Ajodo swore that based on the strength of the affidavit evidence of Mr. Aliyu Umar Ibrahim sworn to on the 13th of October, 2021 he was seeking a Search Warrant to enable him and other operatives under his command carry out investigation at No. 9 Imo Street, Maitama, FCT, Abuja. He supported his affidavit with an Application Letter dated 28th October, 2021 which he signed as O/C Assets Recovery Investigation Team. The letterhead has an email address as agfassetsrecovery@gmail.com.

He also attached a photocopy of his purported Identity Card with his picture and an inscription of Police for Assets Recovery, his rank as CSP, his position as O/c Investigation, and ID Card Number as 001. The ID card was **“signed”** by Abubakar Malami, SAN, the Hon. Attorney General of the Federation with his phone number as 08035667676. I dialled the phone number and Mr. Malami's name appeared on the True Caller, indicating that it was indeed his number.

Just like the alleged whistle-blower, Mr. Ajodo's house address was vague. He purports to be living at Jahi, FCT, Abuja. There was no street name or house number.

The Search Warrant (Form 9) which was duly filled for signature by the Chief Magistrate was titled ***“Between Joint Panel Recovery, Ministry of Justice and House 9, Imo Close, Maitama, Abuja.”*** The complaint was in respect of ***“Illegal activities suspected to prone (sic) to crime at No. 9 Imo Street, Maitama, Abuja”***.

A critical examination of the search warrant showed inconsistencies and vagueness. Recall that the search warrant was sought to be executed on No. 9 Imo Street, Maitama, Abuja but the heading of the Search Warrant read as No. 9 Imo ***“Close,”*** Maitama, Abuja. It is obvious that there is a marked difference between No. 9 Imo ***“Street,”*** Maitama, Abuja and No. 9 Imo ***“Close,”*** Maitama, Abuja. Again, the allegation of ***“illegal activities suspected to prone (sic) to crime”*** is too vague as to give any clear picture of what criminal activities were alleged to be taking place at the said address.

CHIEF MAGISTRATE EMMANUEL IYANNA

The Chief Magistrate, Mr. Emmanuel Iyanna was confronted with these inconsistencies. His response was that after CSP Ajodo left his office with the signed Search Warrant, he took a closer look at the copies of the application CSP Ajodo presented before him and noticed that the

words **"Street"** and **"Close"** were used interchangeably in the Application, Affidavit and the Search Warrant itself.

According to him, knowing the importance of specificity and exactitude of address in the issuance and execution of a search warrant, he instructed the Registrar of the Court to immediately call CSP Lawrence Ajodo, draw his attention to the above and ask him to come back to his office to clarify the use of **"Street" and "Close"**. However CSP Ajodo who promised to come back for him to correct the slip relating to the issue of address never did. Having waited till 5.30 pm that day without seeing him, Chief Magistrate Iyanna said he *suo motu* revoked the Search Warrant. He further stated that he communicated this Revocation Order to CSP Ajodo that same day through his Registrar, even though the mode of communication by the Registrar was not made clear in his response.

The Chief Magistrate was asked if the revocation order was made before the invasion or after. His Honour stated that it was before the invasion, and that the invasion was done on a revoked search warrant that was illegally obtained by CSP Ajodo.

What was the quality and sufficiency of evidence placed before him that warranted the Chief Magistrate to exercise his discretion in signing the Search Warrant? The Chief Magistrate in addressing this issue argued that he was solely guided by the provisions of Sections 143 and 144 of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, 2015 which empowers him, upon being satisfied by information on oath before him, to issue a search

warrant authorising law officers to search a building, ship, carriage, receptacle, motor vehicle, aircraft or place. When asked whether he was really satisfied before signing the search warrant, and based upon the affidavit evidence that contained irregularities and inconsistencies, he stated that he was initially satisfied, since CSP Ajodo identified himself as an officer of the Nigerian Police Force attached to the Joint Panel Recovery under the Federal Ministry of Justice. For purposes of identification and verification, the said CSP presented to him his identification card duly signed by the Honourable Attorney General of the Federation. The signed copy was attached to his application. Moreover, according to him, there were two affidavits sworn before the High Court of FCT, Abuja by the whistle-blower and the Senior Police officer allegedly attached to the Federal Ministry of Justice.

When asked why he did not seek to know the name of the occupant of the said address, he answered that he actually demanded for the name of the occupants of the address, but that CSP Lawrence Ajodo and the whistle-blower orally swore before him and in the presence of his Registrar that the premises sought to be searched was an uncompleted building used by unknown persons suspected to be carrying out some illegal activities. Most importantly, he said, he quickly revoked the said Search Warrant when it became apparent to him that the search warrant with a vague address should not be allowed to be executed on any address. The revocation was done on the same day.

According to the Chief Magistrate, he was later justified by that singular move he made that same Friday as he later learnt that the said CSP Lawrence Ajodo and his co-conspirators sought to execute the *"lifeless"* Search Warrant on No. 7 Imo River Street, Maitama, Abuja as distinct from No. 9 Imo Street and/or No. 9 Imo Close, Maitama, Abuja, being the address contained in the application letter and search warrant.

He was of the strong view that he had no reason to believe that CSP Ajodo and the whistle-blower could lie under oath in respect of the actual address and their real motive for the search warrant.

He was of the view that the issuance of search warrant in respect of No. 9 Imo Close, Maitama, Abuja as opposed to No. 9 Imo Street, Maitama, Abuja which appeared on the application letter was not due to negligence but purely accidental slip which the law allows him to correct upon its discovery, and which he attempted to correct by inviting CSP Lawrence Ajodo to rectify the error.

Finally, he stated that he was misled on oath as to the true intention of CSP Lawrence Ajodo concerning the real address they intended to execute the search warrant for the alleged illegal activities.

What may exculpate the Chief Magistrate, His Honour Emmanuel Iyanna despite his observed negligence and manifest errors in the processes, is the fact that the Search Warrant that contained the address of No. 9 Imo Close, Maitama, Abuja was sought to be executed on No. 7 Imo River, Maitama, Abuja.

There is perhaps no way the learned Chief Magistrate could have deciphered the alleged criminal intent of the deponent, same having been concealed from him. When the Chief Magistrate's eyes were opened to the nefarious intent of the invaders, they refused to honour his invitation to clarify the issue of conflicting addresses. They proceeded to carry out their intended action even when the search warrant had been revoked. The revocation on record was done the same day, signifying promptness in addressing the grave error His Honour committed in signing a search warrant with vague details.

The legal implication of executing a revoked search warrant and a search warrant on a property different from the address on record should be a culpability attributable to those who executed it and not to the person that issued and signed it, moreso when the issuer discovered his own mistake and took immediate steps to correct it.

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Chief Magistrate should be cautioned to be more circumspect whenever signing processes that may be subjected to abuse. There were red flags inherent in the affidavit and inconsistencies that should have put him on enquiry and made him to be a bit more careful before signing the Search Warrant.
2. The Chief Magistrate is exonerated of any serious misconduct as he took extra measures on documentations.

He not only demanded Application Letter but got affidavits duly sworn to at the FCT High Court by the whistle-blower and the alleged policeman. He also demanded the Identity Card of CSP Ajodo who claimed to be the O/C Assets Recovery Investigation Team of the Federal Ministry of Justice, FCT, Abuja.

These demands appear diligent on his part. The fact that he took proactive steps to set aside his order, knowing fully the illegal use to which the order could be put, is another exculpating ground for him.

3. It is noteworthy that the victim, Hon. Justice Mary Odili also made a case specifically for the Chief Magistrate when she interfaced with me and other members of the team. She was of the view that Chief Magistrate Emmanuel Iyanna took extra measures in demanding proper documentations, moreso as many of such orders obtained in the magistracy are often obtained without proper documentation. His Lordship was impressed at the steps the Chief Magistrate took to keep proper documentation of what he needed and signed, contrary to widespread practice of poor documentation of such processes.

In the circumstance, my recommendation is that His Honour has not committed any grievous act in this saga that should warrant a heavy penalty. I am informed that he is presently on suspension from carrying out any judicial function.

It is recommended that the Chief Magistrate be reprimanded and recalled to his duty post, with a warning that he must to be more circumspect in the future to avoid situations like the one he found himself.

MR. ABUBAKAR MALAMI SAN, ATTORNEY GENERAL & MINISTER OF JUSTICE

As stated earlier, my mandate included interfacing with the Attorney General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, Mr. Abubakar Malami SAN whose Ministry was alleged to have authorised the invasion. It is recalled that ACP Emmanuel Ajodo who led the illegal operation was alleged to be working for an Asset Recovery Unit domiciled in the Federal Ministry of Justice. The Minister was more than willing to tell us his own side of the story.

The truth of the matter is that all accusing fingers initially pointed at the Minister when the invasion occurred, moreso as the news media reported that the culprits were from the Federal Ministry of Justice. This notion becomes more compelling when it is realized that the Honourable Attorney General admitted that he authorized the invasion of judges' homes in 2016. It was argued that if he authorised the invasion of 2016, then he must have authorised this latest raid by persons allegedly linked to the Ministry of Justice which he heads. The Minister therefore needed to offer elaborate explanation to exculpate himself and his office from the latest invasion.

The Honourable Attorney General started by stating that there is a unit in his ministry called Asset Tracing, Recovery and Management Committee established sometime in 2019 pursuant to the Asset Tracing, Recovery and Management Committee Regulation 2019. It is an inter-ministerial committee comprising of representatives from ministries, departments and agencies of Government. The committee coordinates the asset recovery and management system on properties of the Federal Government of Nigeria both locally and internationally. If the committee receives any information about illicit property or money of the Federal Government hidden anywhere, the Ministry will forward the information to the appropriate security agencies or law firms to handle. The committee, according to him, does not on its own handle any sting operation. He therefore disassociated the Ministry from any alleged Ghost Account, Local Whistle-blower, Joint Panel Recovery Unit or similar name the perpetrators may have called themselves.

Mr. Malami also denied signing the Identity card of the said CSP Lawrence Ajodo. He stated that the Identity cards of those who work in the Ministry of Justice are signed by the Director of Human Resources or his delegate and not by him. He denied that any unit in his ministry work with the Nigerian Police officers especially in the way and manner the present invasion took place. He denied knowing Lawrence Ajodo or having any private or official dealings with him. He challenged Lawrence Ajodo to produce any letter given to him officially either by himself or any of his subordinates to carry out any official duty on the Ministry's behalf.

Since I did not have any opportunity of interacting with CSP Ajodo in person, I sought and got his extra-judicial statement which was filed in court by the Police.

The first shock from his extra-judicial statement is his assertion that he was not a police officer. In the column for his occupation, he inserted “**business man**”. However in his narration of who he is, he stated that he was trained as a police officer and rose to the rank of Chief Superintendent of Police, CSP. He never mentioned where he worked and how he was promoted to the said rank. He subsequently changed his story and wrote that he was not a serving policeman and that his alleged rank was concocted.

He narrated how in October 2020 he applied and was employed by the Ministry of Justice as a Recovery Agent and was given an Identity Card signed by the Honourable Attorney General. He however did not show any Letter of Employment from the said Ministry. It was while working as O/C Recovery Agent that one “**Godwin**” called him and linked him to the alleged whistle-blower, Mr. Umar Ibrahim. Mr. Umar Ibrahim informed him of some criminal activities going on at No. 9 Imo Street in Maitama, FCT, Abuja. This information made him and his collaborators to seek the necessary court documents in order to proceed against those behind the alleged illegal activities.

It is noteworthy that having failed in their planned invasion of Hon. Justice Odili's home, Ajodo was declared wanted and subsequently arrested by the Nigerian Police at a hotel in Mabushi, Abuja. The Police recovered several documents like **"Operational Report, Federal Government and Joint Taskforce Operations"** dated 28th October, 2021. The documents contained names like Bar. Amadi of the Ministry of Justice; Mr. Johnson, Representative of the Office of the Ministry of Finance; Mr. Michael of the Office of Accountant General and then himself as the O/C, Assets Recovery, Investigation/Security. The name of Bar E. A. Igwe was also on the document.

Mr. Lawrence Ajobo insisted that he had meetings with the Attorney General both in his house in Gwarimpa and in his office at the Ministry of Justice where he was referred to one Madam Juliet in the Ministry who attended to them.

His subsequent statement on the case was how some persons who were not part of the Ministry of Justice funded the acquisition of some of the facilities for their operational activities. Those facilities included laptops, printers and stationery. He also wrote that the lawyers implicated in this whole saga, Messrs Igwe and Alex (especially Bar. Earnest Igwe) only assisted him in facilitating the process of obtaining the Search Warrant with which they carried out their invasion of Hon. Justice Mary Odili's home. He finally admitted that he used the appellation of CSP to make people believe that he is a senior police officer but that he is not a police officer.

Several implicating documents were found on Lawrence Ajodo; they included letters from several lawyers with attachments that contain letters from EFCC and documents involving many banks especially Zenith Bank, UBA, GTbank, FCMB and First Bank. Other documents are the letter headed papers of Ghost Account Local Whistle-blowers with Police, DSS, EFCC with Coat of Arms.

It may be surmised that what activated the invasion was pure greed. Mr. Lawrence Ajodo got an unverified information that large sums of money - perhaps in billions of Naira - were at No. 9 Imo Street, Maitama, Abuja. To make the story palatable, they informed Mr. Ajodo that the whistle-blower had gotten an affidavit backed with EFCC, sworn to at the High Court of FCT, Abuja. Mr. Umar Ibrahim was introduced to Mr. Lawrence Ajodo, the 'hitman' who obviously was known in the circle of whistle-blowers. He took over from there and became the kingpin.

The burgeoning syndicate needed lawyers to facilitate the processing of the Search Warrant. They engaged Bar Alex Onyekuru. According to him, he is not in active legal practice but knows friends who are in active legal practice. It was the need for Search Warrant that got Bar. Igwe entangled in the invasion saga. He promised to secure the Search Warrant to enable them take hold of the money allegedly stashed at No. 9 Imo Street, Maitama, Abuja. The search warrant was secured but the address on the search warrant and the address they went to are different.

FINDINGS ON AJODO VIS-A-VIS THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

1. Lawrence Ajodo is certainly known within the Federal Ministry of Justice and to some EFCC operatives. His illegal activities are also well known within the aforementioned circles, but there is NO OFFICIAL OR DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE linking him with those two agencies. In the absence of any documentation, it will be very difficult to link him officially with either the Federal Ministry of Justice or EFCC. In his own statement, the office facilities he acquired were funded by private individuals and not by any of these agencies. What will be the logic to now presume that he works for the agencies or with them?

2. Lawrence Ajodo was unable to show where his unit or office is domiciled in the Federal Ministry of Justice. If he was an employee of the Federal Ministry of Justice, he would have pointed out to the world where his office is situate within the Ministry. He remains unable to provide any concrete evidence on where his office is domiciled in the Federal Ministry of Justice. Someone who claimed to be holding the "**sensitive**" position of O/C Assets Recovery Unit in the Federal Ministry of Justice ought to have an office space within the Ministry. In addition, he ought to have subordinates and superiors he reports to. Who are his co-workers in the Ministry of Justice? These information were not provided, making it extremely difficult to connect him with the Federal Ministry of Justice.

3. Most importantly was the absence of a Letter of Employment from any of those agencies he claims affiliation with. He did not provide any Letter of Employment to back up his claim of working for the Federal Ministry of Justice, EFCC, Police, DSS or any other agency. His feeble attempt to use an Identity card to establish his relationship fell short of believability. His Identity Card was not signed by the appropriate person within the Ministry.

An investigation revealed that the Attorney General does not sign the Identity Card of workers in the Ministry. Assuming but not conceding that the Attorney General may have signed this one - expressly breaching all protocols due to the alleged importance of the office of Mr. Lawrence Ajodo - a critical observation of the signature showed a marked difference between the known signature of Mr. Abubakar Malami SAN and the one on the Identity Card of Mr. Ajodo. Mr. Ajodo later confessed that the ID card was produced in a business centre and that the Attorney General was not aware that his signature was used on his ID card and other ID cards he procured for his fellow collaborators. Mr. Ajodo specifically said that the Attorney General, Mr Malami Abubakar was not the one that signed his ID card.

4. Mr. Lawrence Ajodo, in a widely televised interview, stated that though he has been working for the Ministry over undisclosed cases, the invasion of Hon. Justice Odili's home was not directed by Mr. Abubakar Malami SAN or any of his subordinates. It is also noteworthy that when the news broke concerning the illegal invasion, EFCC was the first security agency that was 'implicated' before the Agency quickly

debunked the allegation. Till date, we have not been able to establish any official connection between EFCC and Mr. Lawrence Ajodo.

Instructively, Mr. Ajobo said:

"I am not a Police man and I have never been in the Nigerian Police. I have an ID card of Assets Recovery and a name of CSP Ajodo F. Lawrence, Position O/C Investigation with Police Logo, police colour, coat of arms on the ID card. The meaning of CSP on the ID card is Chief Superintendent of Police. I decided to make people believe that I am a Police man".

It is suggested that a man who claimed that he was a police officer designated as Chief Superintendent of Police only to recant later is an unreliable witness. Whatever he says should be taken with a pinch of salt.

Having arrived at this conclusion, it will be untenable to use his tainted and mostly oral evidence to implicate anyone without any corresponding documentary evidence.

I am therefore of the strong view that his allegation that he was an employee of the Federal Ministry of Justice or that he even remotely had their backing for this ill-fated invasion is not established by any shred of evidence. Rather, what can be deciphered, though with caution, is that some persons in the Federal Ministry of Justice have an inkling of the illegal activities of Mr. Ajodo and his collaborators and perhaps they have one way or the other consented or collaborated with him in some of his illegal activities.

One may also conclude that perhaps some persons in the Federal Ministry of Justice may have benefited directly or indirectly from the illegal activities of this syndicate that hangs around the Ministry while using its name to create an official toga in their nefarious activities. The Federal Ministry of Justice officials cannot completely deny that they do not know some members of the syndicate. However, the absence of any official communication or connection is strong enough in my candid view to exonerate the Federal Ministry of Justice and her workers in the present circumstances. I have vigorously sought for that official connection between Mr. Ajodo and the Federal Ministry of Justice. I am afraid that I WAS UNABLE TO SEE ANY.

THE LAWYERS

Two lawyers were mentioned in this ugly incident. Both were charged as Defendants in this case. They are Messrs Alex Onyekuru and Ernest Igwe. From the extra-judicial statement by both parties, Onyekuru was the lawyer the syndicate wanted to use to obtain the court documents needed to ensure that their operation will have a semblance of legality. Mr. Onyekuru, by his own account, is not in serious legal practice involving litigation; he therefore quickly referred them to one Mr. Ernest Igwe who by his age at the Bar and experience was sufficiently competent to help them take necessary legal steps (including procuring the search warrant) they needed to take in order to progress their nefarious plot. Both lawyers were charged for conspiracy, forgery, criminal trespass, criminal intimidation, insult, annoying persons in possession of the property they invaded, among other offences.

To prove these crimes is a matter of evidence. Since the matter is subjudice, I will not delve into the intricacies of the case as we await the pronouncement of the court as to their guilt or innocence. Suffice it to say, and it is recommended, that the Nigerian Bar Association should take disciplinary steps against any lawyer who may be found culpable over the invasion.

The lawyers and all other accused persons in this case must however have their day in court and be accorded fair hearing as enshrined in our constitution. The trial has started in earnest and is expected to be concluded soon so that everyone concerned will know their fate

THE ANALYSIS

Before I conclude this report, it is imperative to hazard what may have precipitated this invasion in the first place, moreso as the thrust of this investigation is to nip such occurrences in the bud and avoid a future recurrence.

This unwholesome invasion was set in motion when one Mr. Yusuf Adamu who claims to reside in Gwarimpa, FCT (but who is originally from Bauchi State) had a brainwave about some money stashed in Mr. Peter Odili's house in Abuja. He lied to his colleagues that he once lived with the Odili's when he did his Youth Service at Rivers State. His Excellency, Mr. Peter Odili in his extra-judicial statement denied ever meeting or knowing him. According to Yusuf, he met one of his friends, Alhaji Bashir who works with Central Bank of Nigeria in April, 2021.

Their discussion shifted to Mr. Peter Odili who was once the Governor of Rivers State. He told his friend that one Muhammed Dangote who lives in Maraba, Nasarawa State told him that there was a load of money in Mr. Peter Odili's house in Abuja.

Mr. Bashir advised that the matter should be forwarded to EFCC straightaway. However, both agreed that before they refer the matter to EFCC, they needed a confirmation of the veracity of the money being available in that house from a religious cleric who has to confirm whether there was money or not. The cleric's name is Aliyu Umaru Ibrahim. Does that name ring a bell? He is the whistle-blower that triggered this invasion by procuring the initial affidavit that Ajodo latched on to do the eventual damage.

Predictably, the cleric **“confirmed”** that there was much money in the house of Mr. Peter Odili and that the money was still intact. At that point, everyone's appetite for the money became enlarged and the flurry of activities became heightened.

An attempt was made to bring EFCC into the matter. However, the man who claimed to be a Director in EFCC was in fact a fake EFCC personnel. At the alleged EFCC office, Aliyu Ibrahim Umaru wrote an undertaking to one Solomon who was said to be a P. A. to one of the EFCC Directors, one Mr. Bayero. From this account, the said Aliyu Ibrahim Umaru took over the case from Mr. Yusuf Adamu.

When they met the said Director (in his house instead of EFCC office), he promised to follow the matter legally and officially.

The “**Director**” made Aliyu Ibrahim to sign undertaking that if he was lying, he would go to jail for 6 months. The alleged Director showed them a document that confirmed the assertion of 6 months jail term for lying on oath.

That was the last the narrator knew about the EFCC angle until, according to him, he opened his phone on 29th October, 2021 and read on the social media that some police operatives invaded the home of Mr. Peter Odili. According to him, he quickly called the alleged EFCC Director, Mr. Bayero and told him what he saw on social media. Mr. Bayero advised him not to worry and that he would call him later. He never did until they all met at the Police Headquarters following their arrest by the police.

The concluding statement of this Accused Person is very apposite. He said:

“I am the person that give (sic) information to Bayero, the alleged EFCC Director that there is money at Peter Odili's house. I did not see the money at Peter Odili's House physically. I have never been to Odili's house before until when I was told by my friend Muhammad Dangote that there was money in the house. This was sometime in the month of April 2021. Muhammed took me to the Odili House in Maitama (House number 7) which I did not enter the compound (sic). The reason why I believe what he told me that (sic) he is working in the house of Odili”.

Evidently, it was this fairy tale as narrated above that apparently birthed greed in everyone who was directly or indirectly linked to the invasion that is now being prosecuted at the Federal High Court, Abuja. Take the whistle-blower, for instance. Everything about him smacks of betrayal and inordinate greed. Recall that he came into this **"game"** when the originators needed 'spiritual' confirmation of the existence of the money.

He not only confirmed that the money was still there but took over the task of being the one to pick the money - recruiting various persons in the process and excluding the initial persons that got him involved in the first place. He displaced others to become the ultimate whistle-blower. At least, he swore the first affidavit over this transaction and would have outsmarted everyone by collecting whether 5 per cent or 2 and half per cent if the deal was genuine.

According to Mr. Aliyu Umaru Ibrahim, who I will refer to as an emergency whistle-blower, he was introduced to Yusuf Adamu who explained to him that Mr. Peter Odili was his master whom he worked with during his NYSC days in Port Harcourt. He bragged to be the godson of the said Odili. Mr. Aliyu Ibrahim became convinced when he swore to this fact with Quran. Mr. Ibrahim took up the responsibility of prayer when Yusuf Adamu explained that his alleged master, Mr. Peter Odili kept large sums of money in his residence which had become a big problem to him. The said money, according to his tale, was owned by three persons who had various issues concerning the money.

By his account, the first man was dead; the second was sick and on the verge of death while the third man is His Excellency, Mr. Peter Odili. The purported problem with Mr. Odili is that he could not touch the money because of the oath they took earlier over the money. Mr. Odili was therefore seriously in search of ‘spiritual cleansing’ before the money could be taken out of his house. Yusuf Adamu then offered himself to engage Mr. Aliyu Ibrahim to do the cleansing.

From this tale and what happened thereafter following his spurious affidavit, it is obvious that greed took over Mr. Aliyu Umaru Ibrahim. Instead of performing the spiritual cleansing for which he was contracted, he swore an affidavit to the effect that he noticed that criminal activities were going on in an uncertain address somewhere in Abuja. By this **"smart"** move, he became the ultimate whistle-blower on record who would have been the one to engage the government for payment of his fees for providing information that would have led to the recovery of the imaginary large sums of money in Mr. Odili's house in Maitama, Abuja.

How Mr. Lawrence became another kingpin in this illegal invasion, to the extent that he recruited virtually everyone that became indicted in this saga, is another Nollywood story. When Aliyu Ibrahim was asked to bring guarantors to **"EFCC"** to authenticate his story, one of the persons he brought was Lawrence Ajodo. The circumstances under which both men met is not too clear from their extra-judicial statements.

HOW AJODO UPSTAGED EVERYONE AND TOOK OVER MANAGEMENT OF THE INVASION.

When the emergency whistle-blower did not have his way in getting **"EFCC"** to officially commence the investigation and recovery of the alleged large sums of money in Mr. Odili's home in Abuja, they shifted their attention to the **"Joint Recovery Panel"** in the Ministry of Justice that allegedly deals with the issue of whistle-blowers and fraudulent money stashed away by criminal minded Nigerians.

Mr. Ajodo, who claimed to be a Chief Superintendent of Police with Force No. 201192, was allegedly in-charge of the Panel or Task Force as O/c Investigation. Mr. Aliyu saw all the documents with him, including the police logo, EFCC, DSS including Coat of Arms, and got convinced about Mr. Ajodo's 'genuineness'. His inquiry revealed that Ajodo was attached to Joint Panel Recovery under the Ministry of Justice. With this information he was convinced that he was in the right place with the right people to recover the several billions of naira allegedly in the home of Mr. Odili.

At this juncture, Mr. Ajodo took over the leadership of the whole operation. Having sworn his own affidavit and collected the Search Warrant from the Magistrate Court, he fixed the invasion to take place at 5 pm on 29th October, 2021.

On the agreed date and time, they all assembled at the Ministry of Justice (whether outside the Ministry or inside an office in the Ministry, as their statements were not too clear on this).

One thing was certain: none of the accused persons ever met Lawrence Ajodo sitting in an office space in the Federal Ministry of Justice. On the day of the operation, they met at the Federal Ministry of Justice before proceeding. They (the Defendants) proceeded from the Federal Ministry of Justice car park for the operation. The operation got terminated when they could not gain further entrance into the house of Hon. Justice Mary Odili after entering the compound.

Their journey was terminated by the vigilant Chief Security Officer to the Hon. Justice Mary Odili, ASP Madaki Chidawa whose alertness attracted the attention of Hon. Justice Mary Odili and her daughter, Hon. Justice Njideka Nwosu-Iheme, then a Magistrate at FCT, Abuja at the time of the incident. The Chief Security Officer alerted the household of the presence of the strange visitors in the compound. Hon. Justice Mary Odili asked her daughter and ASP Madaki to go and find out who the strange invaders were.

Refusing to be cowed by the rampaging Lawrence Ajodo and the retinue of security operatives allegedly comprising of operatives from the Army, EFCC, Police, DSS and civilians, Hon. Justice Njideka Iheme-Nwosu demanded to see the search warrant for their assignment. A quick glance revealed apparent error in the document. First, the address for the search was not the same as the house of the Odili's. The second issue she observed was also the discrepancy in the name of the whistleblower. Armed with these discrepancies, she convinced herself that group was on a failed mission.

She alerted the Hon. Justice Mary Odili who made a few calls, especially to the Supreme Court authorities. Hon. Justice Odili got a quick response to the effect that the Supreme Court authorities did not send anyone on such an illegal mission.

In a few minutes, the social media was agog with the news of the invasion. Some political officials who were gathered in Abuja got wind of the invasion and rushed to the residence of the Odilis. They were coincidentally accompanied by a crew from a popular Television Station. It did not take long before the home of the Odili's were on live television broadcast. Almost immediately, the invaders beat a quick retreat, seeing that their unwholesome gambit was now being beamed to the world.

Instructively, the entire nation stood in solidarity with the Odilis, with many viewing the invasion as absurd, illegal and an attempt to intimidate the judiciary. The incident dominated the news media the following day, with newspapers, television stations, the social media and bloggers feasting on the invasion.

The NBA under the leadership of Mr. Olumide Akpata reacted promptly by vigorously condemning the invasion. The NBA followed it up with a World Press Conference during which Mr. Akpata appointed a Special Investigator to find out what happened and identify all the culprits with a view to bring them to justice.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is imperative to state that this invasion was birthed by greed and downright stupidity. Going by the account of all the dramatis personae, there was neither wisdom nor logic in the entire saga.

The cock and bull story of imaginary sums of money stashed away in Mr. Peter Odili's house was just a mere brainwave of a mind afflicted perhaps by high fever. Before too long, a fable normally told in pepper-soup joints took a life of its own and led to obtaining of court documents to 'legitimize' an absurdity.

The fallout was the invasion of the home of a Supreme Court jurist, thereby disturbing the peace of the entire household and ridiculing the Judiciary and the nation at large. The alertness of the security personnel on duty at the home of Hon. Justice Mary Odili thwarted the brazen illegality that was reminiscent of similar raids in 2016 when the homes of various justices were invaded in midnight invasions that shook the entire country.

The vigilance of Hon. Justice Njideka Nwosu-Iheme, who painstakingly reviewed the court documents and identified discrepancies in same, cannot go unnoticed. It is a matter of conjecture whether some politically exposed persons would have owned up to being behind the invasion had it succeeded as that of 2016. It is noteworthy that both the EFCC and the Attorney General of the Federation as well as the Chief Magistrate have washed their hands off the invasion.

Even the Nigeria Police also distanced itself from Mr. Ajodo, the ring-leader who claimed to be their own with Force No. 201192. Finally, Mr. Lawrence Ajodo ultimately denied himself, recanting being a Chief Superintendent of Police!

It is our strong recommendation that under no circumstance should this sad tale be allowed to repeat itself. The judiciary and its officers must be insulated from this sort of base rascality. The Judiciary must not be intimidated, maligned, disrespected or embarrassed in this manner again. This latest invasion must be the last of such misadventures. Accordingly, it is strongly recommended that all the culprits in this invasion and in the 2016 episode must be brought to justice. This is the only way such rascality that borders on judicial intimidation can be nipped in the bud.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Arising from the foregoing, the following are my recommendations:

1. Substantive and procedural laws with elaborate processes and procedures for the issuance of search warrants, arrest warrants, detention orders, extension of detention orders among others should be enacted for the States and the Federal Government by the Legislature.
2. The independence of the Judiciary should not be a matter for negotiation. It is either we have independent judiciary or we choose not to have it. The advantages of an independent judiciary cannot be over-emphasised.

3. The independence of the Judiciary should not only be on paper but should be practicalised. The administrative, operational and financial autonomy of the Judiciary should be total and exhaustive. The Federal and State governments should not be allowed to pay lip service to the independence of the Judiciary.

4. Government Agencies or Security Agencies that tolerate or harbour criminal gangs, touts or law-breakers in and around their offices should be made to answer to their illegal activities by being summoned by the various committees that superintend over them in the Legislature.

5. Ensuring obedience to Court Orders and respect for the rule of law should remain the eternal pursuit of NBA and other professional bodies until these become abiding principles by every government in Nigeria

6. The Special Investigator will hold watching brief on behalf of NBA over the invasion matter which has commenced at the Federal High Court, Abuja. The next adjourned date is 8th April, 2022.

I thank the NBA President, Mr. Olumide Akpata and the National Executive Council for the singular privilege of serving the Bar in this capacity as a Special Investigator to unravel the culprits and the reason behind the embarrassing invasion of the home of Hon. Justice Mary Odili.

I am of the firm belief and conviction that this unwholesome saga was driven by pure greed coupled with impunity, arrogance and a mentality of being above the law.

It remains to be said that, if the invasion was politically motivated, I could not decipher same from the available evidence I was fortunate to lay hands on; if it was driven by ethnicity, the mix of a multitude ethnic groups among the suspects perhaps gives a lie to this line of thought; if it was motivated by religion, it is to be observed that the suspects cut across both Christianity and Islam, the two major faiths in Nigeria. If there is anything that should be implicated, it is money and the love of money which got all the culprits involved in its hot pursuit.

The Special Investigator will follow this case to its logical end and report to the NBA at the end of trial.

Once again, thank you for the great opportunity to serve NBA and the nation.

Dr. Monday Onyekachi Ubani
Chairman, NBA-SPIDEL.

