



NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION

PORT HARCOURT BRANCH

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MISLEADING SOCIAL MEDIA PUBLICATIONS ON NBA NEC PROCEEDINGS- SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

The attention of the EXCO of the Nigerian Bar Association, Port Harcourt Branch, has been drawn to a social media publication authored by one **Comrade Chetam Thierry Nwala, Esq.** on behalf of the "Transparency Lawyers Initiative", and subsequent commentary by **Tupele Jefferson, Esq.** These publications purport to give an account of proceedings at the National Executive Council (NEC) meeting at Awka regarding the disqualification and subsequent appeal and reinstatement of **Gilbert Ohaka, Esq** as a candidate for the forthcoming Branch Elections.

Following the decision of EXCO, it has become imperative for me, as the **Secretary of the Branch** and a member of the official delegation present throughout the NEC proceedings, to set the record straight. The aforementioned publications were not only inaccurate but were authored by individuals who were not present at the meeting.

Contrary to the claims that the Branch Chairman acted as a "dictator" or attempted to "embarrass" the Branch, the following facts transpired:

- (i) During the NEC meeting, the Branch Chairman, Mrs. Cordelia Uwuma Eke, commended the NBA President for establishing the Sections Appeals Committee.
- (ii) She also sought clarification about what happens in cases where the Appeals Committees give decisions that are clearly at variance with the NBA Constitution, bearing in mind the effect such decisions could have on the Branches. She said this was in view of the Appeals Committee (East) decision on the NBA Port Branch matter, where the Committee relied on attendance list attached to Draft Minutes instead of the Attendance Register as clearly stated in the NBA Constitution. She wondered if this would not create problems for Branches in authentication of attendance of members as strangers could also put down their names without membership numbers and masquerade as members.
- (iii) In response, the NBA President, **Afam Osigwe, SAN**, stated that he was well aware of the Appeals Committee decision on the Gilbert Ohaka case and that he had already told the Committee Leadership that it was a wrong decision.

- (iv) The President elaborated that for a member to have his name on the Branch Register with different signatures and membership numbers was wrong and the Bar should not be seen as encouraging bad behaviour.
- (v) The President noted that NEC cannot review the decision of the Appeals Committee since the Constitution states that their decision is final. He, however, advised other Appeals Committee not to follow the decision as it is a bad precedent.

It should be recalled that as members of EXCO, we all swore to be faithful and bear true allegiance to the Constitution of the Nigerian Bar Association. This behoves on all of us, particularly the Branch Chairman, the solemn responsibility to defend the **Constitution of the Nigerian Bar Association** at all times. Her inquiries at NEC were a direct fulfillment of that professional duty to ensure the sanctity of our electoral processes and membership records.

While we as members of EXCO would ordinarily ignore baseless social media commentaries, the premium our profession places on facts makes this rejoinder necessary. It is essential that members of the Port Harcourt Branch are rightly informed of the actual resolutions reached at NEC.

It is deeply regrettable that the publications were also poised to impugn the integrity of the **Branch Electoral Committee**. The Committee members are professionals who have simply performed their duties to the best of their judgment and in accordance with the rules. To suggest they were "tools" or lacked independence is an unfair assault on their reputations.

We urge all members of the Branch to **ignore the misleading publication** in question. Let us remain focused and work together to ensure a smooth transition for our great Branch.

Yours faithfully,

Obum Nwoye, Esq. FICMC, ACTI
 –Secretary, NBA Port Harcourt Branch

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