



NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION

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STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION ON THE REPORTED KILLINGS IN OYIGBO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF RIVERS STATE

The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) has followed with concern, the reports of killing of persons alleged to be members of the proscribed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) by officers of the Nigerian military, allegedly on the orders of the Governor of Rivers State.

In response to these reports that dominated the social media over the course of last weekend, I spoke separately with the Chairmen of the Ukwa and Port Harcourt Branches of the NBA (the two branches closest to Oyigbo) to ascertain the veracity of these reports of loss of lives and violation of fundamental rights of Nigerian citizens.

Whilst the Chairmen of the two branches expressed concern over the situation, they however informed me that they were yet to conduct an on-the-spot assessment owing to the curfew imposed on the area by the State Government to forestall breakdown of law and order.

In a separate telephone conversation with the Governor of Rivers State, H. E. Nyesom Wike, he categorically denied ordering any such shooting as rumoured, but acknowledged clashes between men of the Nigerian military and some suspected IPOB members in Oyigbo Local Government Area of the State.

The Governor further explained that the curfew imposed on the area was borne out of necessity and assured me that it would be lifted yesterday, 3rd November 2020. I have now confirmed that the curfew has indeed been lifted and that residents of the area are now able to go about their lawful activities.

With the curfew now lifted, the NBA has set up a fact-finding team comprising of: (i) John Aikpokpo-Martins (1st Vice President NBA); (ii) Victor Frank-Briggs (Past Chairman NBA PH Branch); (iii) Chimaroke Ejie (Past Chairman NBA Ukwa Branch); and (iv) Anthonia Osademe (Vice-Chairman NBA PH Branch). The 4-man team is to visit Oyigbo and conduct an inquiry into the events of the last few days in the area, after which the NBA will make its findings known and determine the next steps.

Ahead of the outcome of this exercise, the NBA reiterates its position that in a democratic nation like Nigeria, respect for the fundamental rights of citizens is non-negotiable and can only be derogated from in instances permitted by the Constitution or other laws. We therefore continue to call on all and sundry (including security agencies and those in authority) to respect the dignity of life and fundamental rights of every citizen and desist from conducts likely to undermine our democracy or indeed the unity of Nigeria.

OLUMIDE AKPATA

President

1st November 2020

NATIONAL OFFICERS

Olumide A. Akpata, President

Joyce Oduah, General Secretary; John Aikpokpo Martins, 1st Vice President; Debo Adeyemo kazeem, 2nd Vice President; Mercy Ijato Agada, Treasurer; Olakunle Edun, Welfare Secretary; Raphael Nnamdi Anagor, Financial Secretary; Dr. Rapuluchukwu Nduka, Publicity Secretary; Uchenna Nwadialo, Assistant Secretary; Ferdinand Naza, Assistant Publicity Secretary