



The Inspector-General of Police
Nigerian Police Force
Force Headquarters
Louis Edet House
Abuja
NIGERIA

The Chairman
Police Service Commission
Federal Secretariat Complex
Shehu Shagari Way
Abuja
NIGERIA

SENT BY EMAIL:
ingenpolsecabuja@npf.gov.ng;
ingenpolsecabuja@yahoo.com; and
info@psc.gov.ng

Amsterdam, 8 April 2019

Subject: unacceptable treatment and act of violence against Mr. J.U. Ijeoma

Dear Sir, Madam,

Lawyers for Lawyers is an independent and non-political foundation that seeks to promote the proper functioning of the rule of law by pursuing freedom and independence of the legal profession.

Lawyers for Lawyers is concerned about the maltreatment and well-being of Mr. J.U. Ijeoma, lawyer and human rights defender.

According to the information that we have received from a reliable source, Mr. Ijeoma was brutally assaulted by officers of the anti-kidnapping unit of the Nigerian police force when he accompanied his client to the State Command Headquarters of the Nigerian Police in Asaba, Delta State on March 26th, 2019.

Unfortunately, this was not the first time for Mr. Ijeoma to be maltreated by the Nigerian police force. We trust you are familiar with other incidents of grave violence against him (we have information about incidents in 2015 and 2017).



We have been told that on the said date of March 26th, Mr. Ijeoma's client was ordered to report at the Police Headquarters without a proper cause and Mr. Ijeoma accompanied her. Mr. Ijeoma and his client arrived at the Police Headquarters around 10 am in the morning and were told to wait for an officer who would come and interrogate Mr. Ijeoma's client. They waited at the Police Headquarters for almost a whole day.

When Mr. Ijeoma's client still wasn't interrogated in the early evening, Mr. Ijeoma suggested that they would plan the hearing for the next day. The Officer-in-Charge (OC) then flared up and ordered that Mr. Ijeoma's client would be taken to the detention room. Mr. Ijeoma objected and informed his client about her rights. He was holding her phone in his hands and was ordered to hand over the phone. Mr. Ijeoma refused to do so and the Investigating Police Officer (IPO) slapped Mr. Ijeoma in his face, in the presence of the OC.

Mr. Ijeoma told the OC that he wanted to report to him that his officer had just slapped him, but he got ignored. The OC then wrongfully accused him from kicking his client's baby car seat that was standing in front of him. The OC ordered for Mr. Ijeoma's detention too.

Mr. Ijeoma was captured by four officers. They held him and beat him severely, tearing off his clothes. The officers chained Mr. Ijeoma's legs and left him in the room. They filled the room with tear gas and then closed the door. Mr. Ijeoma was coughing and gasping for his breath.

When the officers finally returned and opened the door and window, Mr. Ijeoma managed to make a picture of himself with his phone by means of evidence. The officers rushed to take Mr. Ijeoma's phone, who refused to hand it over. Mr. Ijeoma then was beaten again. The officers were ordered to beat him 'professionally' and avoid leaving any trace. The officers left Mr. Ijeoma half-naked.

Another lawyer arrived at the police station and managed to convince the officers to remove Mr. Ijeoma's leg chain. The lawyer took Mr. Ijeoma to the office of one Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Dimka, who apologised for the behaviour of the officers. The DSP arranged for some clothing for Mr. Ijeoma. Around 9 pm, Mr. Ijeoma was finally permitted to leave the Police Headquarters.

Mr. Ijeoma has been suffering from the severe beating. The next day, he had to undergo an X-ray and is still waiting for the outcome of the medical test. We are concerned about the way Mr. Ijeoma was treated while performing his professional duties as a lawyer. He should be treated with dignity and respect, and be safeguarded from any kind of violence, intimidation or threats.



In this light, we would like to draw your attention to the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers¹, and more in particular Article 16 and 17, which read:

16. Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economic or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.

17. Where the security of lawyers is threatened as a result of discharging their functions, they shall be adequately safeguarded by the authorities.

In view of the above, Lawyers for Lawyers respectfully urge you to immediately:

- Carry out a prompt, thorough, impartial and transparent investigation into the described incident of March 26th, 2019, so as to identify all those responsible, bring them before a competent and impartial tribunal and apply to them the sanctions provided by the law
- Openly condemn any and all acts of violence, intimidation or threats against lawyers;
- Guarantee in all circumstances that all lawyers in Asaba, Delta State are able to carry out their legitimate professional rights and duties without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.

Thank you for your attention to this very important matter. We are confident that both the government of Nigeria will give this case the attention it deserves and we will continue to monitor this case closely.

Yours sincerely,

LAWYERS FOR LAWYERS (L4L)

p.p.

Phon van den Biesen, President

Cc to: - Mr. J.U. Ijeoma
- National Human Rights Commission: info@nigerianrights.gov.ng;
- Ministry of Justice: info@fmj.gov.ng

¹ The UN Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers provide a concise description of international norms relating to the key aspects of the right to independent counsel. The Basic Principles were unanimously adopted by the Eighth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders in Havana, Cuba on 7 September 1990. Subsequently, the UN General Assembly "welcomed" the Basic Principles in their 'Human rights in the administration of justice' resolution, which was adopted without a vote on 18 December 1990 in both the session of the Third Committee and the plenary session of the General Assembly.