

PRESS STATEMENT

Rejoinder: Villa Visit: Hon. Chief Justice of Nigeria Did Not Advocate for Establishment of Special Courts

The attention of the Honourable the Chief justice of Nigeria, Hon. Mr. Justice Walter Samuel Nkanu Onnoghen, GCON, has been drawn to a misleading sub-headline on Page 8 of *The Nation* newspaper of Wednesday, April 25, 2018 which reported His Lordship's interaction with State House Correspondents after his meeting with His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, on Tuesday 24th April, 2018.

The headline of the story, ***"Don't Blame Judges for Delayed Cases, Says CJN"*** captured the actual thrust of the Hon. CJN's comments but the sub-head: ***"Executive, Legislature Should Establish Special Courts"***, gives the impression that His Lordship the Hon. CJN was advocating for the establishment of Special Courts. This cannot be further from the truth.

The exact words of the Hon. CJN, during his interaction with State House Correspondents at the Presidential Villa, were as follows:

“It is the Executive that has the prerogative in conjunction with the legislature to set up courts, including the Special Courts, under our Constitution. It is not the duty of the Judiciary nor that of the Chief Justice of Nigeria. If a Special Court, or any court for that matter, the powers that decide to establish them, the Judiciary will run it by providing the manpower”.

This answer was to a question from one of the Correspondents who wanted to know when Special Courts would be established to try corruption cases.

The Hon. CJN then proceeded to elaborate on the efforts of the Judiciary, which he heads, in speedy trial of corruption cases in the following words:

"Under the circumstances, I must admit that so far, so good. It is in order to make you know the workings of the system that I set up the COTRIMCO (Corruption and Financial Crime Cases Trial

Monitoring Committee). All along, everybody is passing the buck right, left and centre. The Prosecutor is saying 'no, it is not our responsibility; we are not the cause of the delay'. The investigator is saying, 'I am not the cause'. The Judge will say, 'I am not the cause.

So, the people must know who is actually causing the delay. That is why I set up the Committee; and it is made up of the Defense Counsel, the Prosecutor and the Judiciary under the NJC (National Judicial Council)".

This Statement is to set the record straight and re-iterate the position of the Hon. Chief Justice of Nigeria, which he has publicly stated severally, including most recently at a workshop organized by the Savannah Centre for Diplomacy, Democracy and Development (SCDDD) at the Shehu Musa YarÁdua Centre, Abuja, that the power to establish any Court under the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, lies with the Executive and Legislative arms of government; not with the Hon. CJN or the Judiciary.

Please give this clarification the publicity it deserves.

Thank you.

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Senior Special Assistant to Hon. CJN on Media

26th March, 2018