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NHRC TASKS EBONYI COMMUNITIES AGAINST OSTRACIZATION

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has reiterated its commitment to ensure that any person or group who indulges in ostracization of any citizen despite warning by the Commission is punished in accordance with the law.

A member of the Special Investigation Panel on

Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) Mr. Abdulrahman Yakubu who disclosed this recently while chairing the Panel in Ebonyi state on behalf of the Executive Secretary, Tony Ojukwu Esq. assured Nigerians that it will no longer be business as usual for the perpetrators of highly discriminatory acts.

According to the Human Rights Defender, the idea of ostracising some members of the community upon some flimsy excuses such as defaulting in payment of community levies runs contrary to the Constitution of Nigeria as well as relevant regional and international Conventions to which Nigeria is a signatory.

Continuing, he stated that there are better and lawful procedures for addressing issues involving deviant members of the society which ostracization cannot be an option.

Yakubu who is also a member of the Independent Investigative Panel on allegations of human rights violations by the defunct SARS also decried the torture, inhuman and degrading treatment meted out to some women in Amasiri Community of Afikpo North local government Area of Ebonyi state by the Chief, members of his cabinet and the town crier.

One of the women who suffered the degrading treatment said that they refused to cooperate with the leadership of the community in confiscating and selling people's land which did not go down with the headship of the area and the same resulted in their being ostracised by the rest of the community members.

The embattled women testified before the NHRC panel that they were stopped from using the social amenities in the community including the only government dug borehole water, and that they were also cut off from electricity supply despite belonging to the community.

Besides, the ostracised women alleged that



NHRC Headquarters, Abuja

the Chief and his cohorts levelled their farm lands, while their children were flogged and chained in some cases and that they could not defend themselves or feel free in the community because they were denied freedom of movement and association.

One of the respondents, who identified himself as the town crier of the community conceded that some women were actually ostracised by the leadership of the community even though he claimed ignorance of the reason for their ostracization.

According to the town crier, he was only instructed by the Chief of the community to invite members of the Chief's ruling council which he did and without staying back to listen to the discussions that led to the said

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NHRC RESCUES CAGED WOMAN IN KATSINA, ENSURES SHE GETS MEDICAL ATTENTION

The Katsina office of the NHRC has rescued one Laritu Safiyanu who was chained and caged by her family members in Gyaza village, Kankai Local Government Area of Katsina State. The Katsina state coordinator Barrister Adamu Umaru Kasimu said the Commission received information from a Good Samaritan intimating them of

Laritu's imprisonment in Gyaza on the ground of alleged mental health issues. Barrister Adamu said it took the intervention of the Commission and other stakeholders to rescue the victim from the inhuman and degrading treatment meted upon her by her family members. He said investigation revealed that the woman who was kept in a filthy environment unsuitable for human habitation had for a long time been denied her rights to dignity of a human person; a situation he lamented may have contributed to her state of mental instability.

The Commission's State coordinator who ordered the immediate release of Laritu from the deplorable condition she was subjected to also tasked the family

to urgently take her to the hospital for thorough medical examination and care, stressing that the Commission will continue to monitor the condition of the victim to ensure that she gets the right kind of treatment she deserves.

Adamu used this medium to educate the family of the victim on human rights norms reiterating that every person deserves to live in dignity and be free from all forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, asserting that the 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria as amended provides for the right to life and dignity, therefore any action that infringe on this fundamental right or any other human right is highly unacceptable and must be discouraged in all ramifications. ●



Tony Ojukwu, Esq.
Executive Secretary

NHRC COMMENCES SECOND PHASE HEARING ON SGBV IN ENUGU, RECEIVES 28 COMPLAINTS

A special investigation panel on Sexual and Gender Based Violence, (SGBV) constituted by the National Human Rights Commission has commenced hearing in Enugu, South East Nigeria.

The sitting is organised by the NHRC in partnership with EU UN Spotlight Initiative, and with the support of other stakeholders like People of Japan, etc.

The Executive Secretary of the National Human Rights Commission, Tony Ojukwu Esq in an address, noted that the panel received one hundred and thirteen complaints across the six geo-political zones, with south east accounting for the highest number of thirty-five, representing 30% of the total complaints received.

"This panel was constituted as a result of the complaint received on Friday the 26th of April 2019, where armed security personnel led by the Abuja Environmental Protection Board, (AEPB) under the auspices of the FCT Joint Task Force raided night clubs and the streets of Abuja. They claimed that the raids were intended to arrest prostitutes in which about 71 women were arrested and held in different police stations in Abuja".

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OJUKWU, STAKEHOLDERS HARP ON BENEFITS OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

"It is in respect of the foregoing that the Commission has since taken action on the implementation of the various Phases of WPHRE especially in schools", the Executive Secretary added.

The workshop, Ojukwu noted, is designed to enrich the stakeholders' knowledge on the implementation of the World Programme on Human Rights Education in the school system as well as develop strategies, build partnerships among them.

In a goodwill message from the Danish Institute for Human Rights read by the Commission's Deputy Director, Human Rights Education and Promotion, Hussaina Alkali, the institute is pleased with the fruitful collaboration they have enjoyed in working with the Commission, hoping that the workshop will address the challenges that exist in

ALLEGED THREAT TO LIFE: FORMER ZAMFARA GOVERNOR APPEARS BEFORE IIP-SARS READY TO SETTLE OUTSIDE PANEL

Former Zamfara state Governor, Senator Ahmad Yerima on Wednesday appeared before the Independent Investigative Panel on alleged human rights violation by the defunct Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and other units of the Nigerian Police following his summon over alleged complicity in threatening the life of a businessman, Alhaji Musa Wapa.

Yerima was summoned by the panel to answer to allegations that he mobilised some Police Officers to arrest, torture and detain the Katsina State born business man over a claim of N23million.

In their response, the two parties agreed to resolve the issue amicably. The panel further directed that counsel to the panel should monitor the settlement as amicus curiae to ensure amicable settlement between the two parties. The matter was adjourned to 5th of March, 2021 for the report of the settlement to be submitted before the panel.

"In these raids, nine or very few men were arrested. Victims of the raid made serious allegations of rape, sexual harassment, and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatments".

Ojukwu said that the incident raised an outcry on the SGBV menace in homes, work places, church places, and other places of worship. "The case of little Ochanya in Benue state can also not be overemphasized" Ojukwu noted.

Details of the terms of reference of the panel, include but not limited to review extant laws and regulations applicable to joint task forces in all the states and FCT in particular, especially the Abuja Environmental Protection Board (AEPB) and whether such laws and regulations are compliant with Chapter 4 of the 1999 Constitution and other international human rights conventions and protocols applicable to Nigeria.

Others are to identify individuals directly responsible for any violations and abuses and make recommendations for further actions including but not limited to prosecutions, disciplinary proceedings and damages amongst others.

The National Human Rights Commission

the implementation of the WPHRE.

Mr. Babatunde Aremu who represented the National Commission for Colleges of Education stated that his organization has done a lot in ensuring that human rights contents are included in their curriculum which is being reviewed after five years.

Mrs. Loretta Achor, who also represented the National Universities Commission (NUC) said that the Commission has accredited a number of human rights courses and hoped that at the end of the workshop some issues bedeviling human rights in the Universities will be addressed.

Resource persons spoke on the opportunities and challenges that exist in the implementation of WPHRE as well as made various recommendations on mainstreaming human rights in the school curriculum to meet the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). ●

The complainant has earlier testified how Yerima used the IGP- Intelligence Response Team to deny him the payment of N25 million for three trailers of corn he supplied to his farm, (Rufai Poultry Nigeria Ltd). During his cross examination before the panel, the complainant had informed the panel that Yerima owed him the sum of N25m even as he admitted that he (Wapa) also owed the Senator N23m.

He said that his First Bank account has been frozen as a result of his issue with Senator Yerima and the Police. Asked what he wants the panel to do for him, he pleaded with the panel for N100million compensation, for the alleged violations and tarnishing of his image, saying the Police made him to appear as a terrorist.

In his cross-examination, counsel to the Nigerian Police, Mr. James Idachaba (DCP), told the panel that Wapa's arrest was sequel to a court order, which Wapa said he was not aware of. ●



commended the complainants and the public for the courage to lodge and follow up their complaints and submit memoranda to this Panel despite some reported cases of intimidation.

"I want to reiterate the assurance of this Panel and the Commission's commitment to the principles of fair hearing in discharging its functions". Ojukwu said.

The Commission also thanked the Governor of Enugu state, Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi for his support in providing a convenient climate for Human Rights works in the state through zero tolerance to Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV).

EU UN Spotlight Initiative is a global multi-year intervention into sexual violations against women and girls. ●

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IIP-SARS DNA TEST SHOWS WOMAN NOT THE MOTHER OF HER "SON"

result before the panel said the integrity of the test is 99% he told the panel how he advised the police to declare that there is a match else the circle will not end as a fifth claimant to the child has surfaced.

It would be recall that Esther Tanko petitioned the panel sometime in November 2020 over alleged abduction and enforce disappearance of her son Elijah Tanko by one Chioma and an unidentified man on 9 October 2019.

Esther narrated to the panel how her attention was drawn to images circulating on social media about missing children and she said her son happens to be among the missing children, and was declared to be in the custody of the Anti-Robbery Squad. (SARS) she noted.

The complainant said she went to SARS to identify her son unexpectedly there were other parents laying claim to the child as theirs despite the fact that the child identified and called out to her on seeing her.

With this development, the complainant said she was then asked to go for a DNA test to determine the maternity of the said child, but due to lack of funds to conduct the medical test Abba Kyari paid for the medical bills.

Esther brought before the panel as evidence a birth certificate, polio vaccination card and pictures of her missing child.

The case has been adjourned to 7 April 2021 for submission of written address. ●

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HRC TASKS EBONYI COMMUNITIES AGAINST OSTRACIZATION ostracization of the women.

Of the 12 cases that were brought before the panel, 9 were concluded, 2 were referred to NHRC Ebonyi state Office and one was referred to the Cross Rivers sitting coming up in first week of March, 2021.

He also commended the Ebonyi state government and the Commissioner of Police for acting on the directive of the panel to ensure the appearance of some respondents before the panel who had in the past ignored invitations by the Commission's Office in Ebonyi state.

He therefore urged them to continue to cooperate with the Commission in the state so that addressing human rights issues will be seamlessly done in the state. ●

IIP-SARS DNA TEST SHOWS WOMAN NOT THE MOTHER OF HER "SON"

Dr Kelvin Nwabueze a consultant pathologist and the head of the anatomic pathology and forensic medicine at Asokoro district hospital Abuja, has appeared before the justice Suleiman Galadima led IIP-SARS panel regarding the issue of alleged abduction and enforced disappearance of a child Elijah Tanko brought before the panel by an indigent woman Esther Elijah.

The medical practitioner informed the panel that in July 2020 he was contacted by DCP Abba Kyari of the Inspector General of police intelligence Response Team to run a DNA test on a child recovered from alleged child traffickers, and three different women claiming to be the mother of the child.

Continuing the doctor said samples of the child in question and the following women; Esther Tanko, Ifeyinwa Vera and Rosemary Chidiebere respectively were taken at the Asokoro General Hospital, and were sealed in the presence of the women's witnesses and the IPO in charge of the case for onward transmission via FEDEX to a

forensic centre in Lagos for analysis.

However, while the result was being awaited according to the Dr a fourth claimant to the child surfaced and reported to the IRT unit. He said at that time the IRT contacted him but he told them that the results were already out and the maternity investigation proves Rosemary Chidiebere was the biological mother of the unknown child, he stated.

But the police insisted in the interest of fairness the fourth woman Jamui Muniat be investigated also so her samples were taken and that of the unknown child and sent to the forensic centre in Lagos again, but unfortunately, he said the EndSARS protest broke out the centre was vandalized, he added.

Dr Nwabueze said due to the importance attached to the investigation, he contacted a world leading centre on DNA called DDC in Ohio United State and they referred him to their Nigerian agent Arrive and Alive centre in Lagos where the fourth test was later conducted.

Meanwhile Dr Nwabueze while interpreting the

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OJUKWU, STAKEHOLDERS HARP ON BENEFITS OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

Executive Secretary National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Tony Ojukwu Esq. has called for a stronger commitment of stakeholders in entrenching a culture of respect for human rights and dignity in schools across the Country.

Ojukwu stated this in Abuja during a workshop on the Implementation of Human Rights Education in the School System in Nigeria.

The NHRC Boss said the workshop which was organized by the Commission with support from the Danish Institute for Human Rights has created another



platform to highlight the benefits of human rights education in schools.

Ojukwu who was represented by the Director, Human Rights Education and Promotion, Barr. Aver Gavar stated that the theme of the workshop was apt

considering the objectives of the World Program on Human Rights Education (WPHRE) and the adoption of the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Nigeria.

According to him, Nigeria's adoption of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training 2011 and WPHRE 2004 respectively speak volumes about the resolve to build a formidable and viable country that is strong to ensure quality education, knowledge and skills needed to promote lifelong learning opportunities and sustainable development.

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SARS OPERATIVES HANGED ME FROM THE CEILING, TORTURED ME AND BROKE MY LEG

The Independent Investigative Panel on allegations of human rights violations by the defunct Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and other units of the Nigerian Police on Friday listened to how SARS operatives severely tortured one John Ogbu at their office, 'Abattoir', and broke his leg.

John Ogbu, a dealer in new and second hand electronic and home appliances in Gwagwalada narrated to the panel that on the 24th April 2018, at about 3pm, a man, who he later identified as Insp Edwin Kendiry came to his shop with a stranger who claims that he sold stolen electronics to Ogbu.

In his testimony before the panel, Ogbu said immediately the stranger pointed him out, Insp Edwin carried nine television sets from his shop without explanation and thereafter he

handcuffed and took him away to Gwagwalada Police Station.

Upon interrogation at the Police Station, Ogbu maintained he had never seen the stranger before that day, this infuriated Insp Edwin, who started beating him. He was detained for 2 hours; thereafter he was taken to the popular SARS office, Abattoir.

Continuing in his narration before Garba Tetengi SAN, who stood in for the Chairman, Ogbu said the next day he was taken to the torture room where his arms were twisted to the back and chained to his legs which were bent behind from the knee, he was then hanged onto the ceiling and then beaten continuously with dangerous weapons by other SARS operatives led by Insp Edwin.

After the severe torture he discovered he could not walk again and two weeks later

was released, because investigation revealed that he was wrongly accused.

He was then granted bail in the sum of N150,000, thereafter he was taken to the University of Abuja Teaching Hospital Gwagwalada for medical examination. An x-ray was carried out, and it was confirmed that the bone in his right leg was broken. He had to undergo surgery at the Allied Hospital in Gwagwalada at the cost of N400,000, to fix his leg.

His prayer to the panel is that he wants to be compensated for the cruel and inhuman degrading treatment he suffered, the injury to his right leg; because he still walks with iron within his leg and the losses he suffered when his goods were carted away. The panel adjourned for further hearing to 15th March, 2021 for the first respondents (Insp Edwin) to appear before it. ●

DEATH IN CUSTODY: VICTIM DID NOT DIE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE AS ALLEGED BY POLICE

The Chief Consultant Pathologist of University of Abuja Teaching Hospital, Gwagwalada (UATH) on Wednesday appeared before the Independent Investigative Panel on human rights violations by the disbanded Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and other police units following summons to clear the air on the cause of death of late Ifeoma Abugu whom the police alleged died in custody following substance abuse.

Dr Abimiku in his analysis of the autopsy result he conducted on the late Ifeoma Abugu before the Justice Suleiman Galadima(rtd) led panel, stated that from his preliminary autopsy examination he noticed that her fingernails, lips and tongue were bluish, indicating that she had respiratory problem before she died.

Explaining further, the pathologist said there were bruises on her knees. According to him, a cursory look at her organs revealed that there was accumulation of fluid in her lungs causing pulmonary congestion. His examination of her kidney also revealed noncancerous cyst, multiple fibroid in her uterus and vaginal swab shows dead sperms deposited in her body.

Continuing, he said in his thorough investigation of the cause of death as alleged by the police, he did a toxicology test to ascertain the allegation that she died from drug ingestion. He said he did this by way of testing her body fluids for all the eleven drugs commonly abused, like Rohypnol,

diazepam, barbiturate, marijuana, narcotic, cannabis, tranquilizers, amphetamines etc and all results came back negative.

To rule out all doubts, Dr Abimiku informed the panel that he further tested the late Ifeoma specifically for cocaine and still the result came out negative.

At this point Dr Abimiku disclosed to the 11-man investigative panel that the cause of death of Ifeoma Abugu was Anoxia, a medical condition caused by a decreased or lack of oxygen supply to the lungs. "And this can come about as a result of strangulation, choking or suffocation" he added.

Under cross examination, the counsel to the respondents James Idachaba tried to discredit the report by alleging that the autopsy result was in contention because his respondents sought for second opinion on the result therefore he alleged the autopsy lacked integrity.

The doctor responded by saying "Autopsy result does not favour anybody, it is meant to establish the cause death".

Although the autopsy was done at the instance of the police, the panel members asked if the period of death and the time autopsy was conducted could change anything, the pathologist answered in the negative saying longer period can only make dissection difficult. But he was quick to add that the vaginal swap result if done early could have made a DNA of the sperm found in her possible; however that cannot be possible because sperm can only live for 72

hours in a woman's body.

On the circumstances that led to the autopsy which was conducted by Dr Abimiku, he informed the panel that, the IPO alleged that Ifeoma Abugu's fiancé was a suspected drug dealer and when they went to arrest him on the 10th September, 2020 they met Ifeoma at home, who he also claims was into sale and consumption of drugs. She was then arrested and she later died in police custody on the 11th of September, 2020 of alleged drug overdose. In a bid to establish her cause of death she was taken to the hospital on the 25th of September 2020 for autopsy.

In his response the chairman of the panel ordered the immediate release of the corpse to the family for proper burial rites, and the case was adjourned to 24th March 2021 for the police to open their defence.

It will be recalled that the case was part heard in February 2021 when Afam Ugwuwa, the fiancé, testified before the panel that she died in custody of the police.

Afam also said that the police alleged Ifeoma died of drug abuse, while the autopsy states that she died of anoxia.

It was as a result of the discrepancies between the police and the complainant that informed the decision of the panel to summon the Chief Consultant Pathologist who has now given a medical account of the circumstances of her death. ●

STATE OFFICES AT A GLANCE

Abia State Office: No. 6, Chukwu Avenue, By Ikot Epena Rd, Umuahia, Abia State. Tel: 09033473732	Benue State Office: MDGs Office Complex, Kaunum Acka Street, Old GRA, Makurdi. Tel: 08136730830	Ekiti State Office: Iyin Road, Basiri, Ado Ekiti, Ekiti State. Tel: 0803 4100285, 0818 6885278	Kano State Office: Plot 313, Gyadi-Gyadi, New Hospital Rd, Opp. Mal. Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital, Kano. Tel: 08032833051	Nasarawa State Office: Old Lafia Hotel, By Government House, Shendam Road, Lafia, Nasarawa State. Tel: 08033639276	Plateau State Office: Plot 12677, Laminga/Liberty Dam Rd, Opp. Civic Registration Office, Rikkos Village, Jos. Tel: 08033453245
Adamawa State Office: No. 14, Atiku Abubakar Way, Jimeta, Yola, Adamawa State. Tel: 0803 4943002	Borno State Office: No. 4, Bama Road, Maiduguri, Borno State. Tel: 0806 7833036	Enugu State Office: Enugu State Office: No. 3, Ezeagu Street, New Haven, Enugu, Enugu State. Tel: 08060112370	Katsina State Office: No. 3, Nagogo Rd, GRA, Katsina, Katsina State. Tel: 08060112370	Niger State Office: Abdullahi Kure House, Muazu Moh'd Rd, (Old Airport Road), Minna, Niger State. Tel: 08033365395, 08074186745	Rivers State Office: No. 2, Temple Ejekwe Close, Off Port Harcourt/Aba Express Way, Port-Harcourt, Rivers State. Tel: 08036747115
Akwa Ibom State Office: No. 160m Nwaniva Rdm Uyim Akwa Ibom State. Tel: 0803 5403780	Cross River State Office: No. 39, Okoro Agbor, Ibom Layout, Calabar, Cross River State. Tel: 0803 7135494	Gombe State Office: No. 68, 69 & 70, Ground Floor, 362, 363 & 364 3rd Floor, Federal Secretariat Complex Behind, Bauchi State Motor Park, Gombe, Gombe State. Tel: 08065829312	Kebbi State Office: Abubakar Musa Garkuwa Street, Geshe Phase 1, Birnin-Kebbi. Tel: 08065829312	Ogun State Office: No. 27, Kuforji Olubi Drive, Adigbe, Abeokuta, Ogun State. Tel: 08058133007	Sokoto State Office: Investment House, Kano Road, Sokoto, Sokoto State. Tel: 07039356635
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