



# NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION

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## STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION, MR YAKUBU CHONOKO MAIKYAU, OON, SAN, TO COMMEMORATE THE 2023 INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

*Sunday, 10 December 2023*

Today is International Human Rights Day and the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) joins the rest of the world to celebrate this day, which is also the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). On 10 December 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the UDHR, and ever since, the date has been set aside to mark that global milestone and the rights and freedoms enshrined in the document.

The UDHR is the global blueprint for international, national, and local laws and policies – a bedrock of the 2030 sustainable development agenda. In the years since the Declaration, human rights recognition and protection around the world have continued to advance with the UDHR as the benchmark for assessment and the foundation for the expansion thereof. Although the promises of the UDHR have, in recent times, come under serious and sustained attack from different world systems, it is relevant more than ever as it continues to provide the guidepost for our collective action.

This year's celebration is the culmination of the year-long campaign that commenced on 10 December 2022, with the theme, ***“Dignity, Freedom and Justice for All”*** and a call to **#StandUp4HumanRights**. As an Association that aims, inter alia, to *promote and protect the principles of the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights, human rights, and people's rights*, this year's theme and the call to action is one that resonates with the NBA.

The observance of International Human Rights Day goes beyond mere platitudes and speech-making every year, it is an opportunity for us to assess the impact of those time-tested values and inalienable rights embedded in the UDHR and other human rights instruments to which our country subscribes and identify areas of improvements. I therefore, on behalf of the NBA, wish to restate our commitment to championing and upholding the fundamental human rights as enshrined in the three landmark documents we subscribe to as a Nation: the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights.

The concept of “justice for all” is unattainable without an independent judiciary. Individual rights and freedoms will remain a mirage without a truly independent and competent judiciary. For human rights to thrive, there must be in place a judiciary that commands the respect and confidence of the people – members of society must have confidence in the capacity and integrity of the court to dispense justice. Similarly, an independent and vibrant Bar is necessary for the attainment and preservation of individual rights and freedoms. As observed by Sir Adetokunbo Ademola, CJN (of blessed memory), ***“The respect in which the Bar in any country is held is the best indicator of the freedom in that country.”*** Consequently, my administration is committed to upholding one of the cardinal objectives of the NBA, which is the ***“Maintenance and defense of the integrity and independence of the Bar and the Judiciary in Nigeria.”***

### NATIONAL OFFICERS:

Yakubu Chonoko Maikyau, OON, SAN President

Adesina Adegbite, FICMC, General Secretary; Linda R. Bala (Mrs), 1st Vice President; Chukwuemeka Clement Ugo, 2nd Vice President; Amanda Ego Demechi-Asagba, 3rd Vice President; Caroline Ladidi Anze-Bishop, Treasurer; Chinyere Gladys Obasi, Welfare Secretary; Akorede Habeeb Lawal, Publicity Secretary; Daniel K. Kip, Assistant Secretary; Charles Ajiboye, FICMC, FCAI, ACIS Assistant Publicity Secretary

We must always therefore, as members of the legal profession, sitting at the Bar or on the Bench, conduct ourselves within the bounds of ethics and our rules of professional conduct, as that is the only way we can earn the confidence, and command the respect of the public. We have a critical role to play in society and that is not something to be treated with levity or taken lightly. We must work daily to uphold the rights of Nigerians because human rights are the catalyst for the development we seek.

I enjoin members of the NBA to get committed to the pro bono programme by volunteering with the NBA Pro Bono Centre, as I have always maintained that remuneration should not be the primary motivation for the services we render as lawyers. We must make provision for free legal services to indigent citizens. Let us create awareness in our respective communities and encourage deserving citizens to avail themselves of our pro bono service. And by so doing move “Justice for All” from mere rhetoric to becoming the reality of our countrymen, bearing in mind always that *“the legal practitioner lives for the direction of his people and the advancement of the cause of his Country”* (Sir Christopher Alexander Sapara Williams).

I call on members of the Bar to join hands as we collaborate with other stakeholders for the purpose of advancing the human rights of all Nigerians regardless of ethnic group, state, gender, language, status, or political persuasion.

On its part, government at all levels must renew its social contract with the people by adopting policies that are people-oriented and which align with sustainable development principles. Government must recognize the place of economic policies in increasing inequality, fueling instabilities, and eroding the fabric of society, and take steps to address these. I reiterate my call on the Federal Government of Nigeria to pay close attention to security, the economy, and the administration of justice, if we are to achieve a fair and just society that works for all Nigerians.

As the world faces new challenges, the UDHR provides guideposts for our collective actions that ensures that no one is left behind. Human rights must be applied towards development, peace, and security – we must aim to overcome human rights violations which reverberate across borders and transcends generations; strive to achieve greater freedoms and equality for all; and work together to attain a more sustainable, just, and prosperous country for ourselves and the generations yet unborn.

I wish you all a Happy International Human Rights Day!



**Yakubu Chonoko Maikyau, OON, SAN**  
PRESIDENT