



- Transparency
- Accountability
- Citizen's Participation & Inclusiveness
- Improved Public Service Delivery
- Facilitating Less Criminogenic Systems
- Deepening Democracy
- Enhancing Good Governance

Flat 1, Block 2 Mwanza Close Opp. Tamara Guest Inn Annex, Off Idimba Sreet, Off. Abidjan Street, Wuse Zone 3, Abuja.
+234 (0) 8068652640, 08065281411, 08121599331 info@speakoutafrica54.org www.speaoutafrica54.org @africa_speakout

2023 Elections: Text of Press Statement on The Official Launch of **FixJustice.NG** project in Abuja

*"To Strengthen the Administration of Electoral Justice & Accountability in Nigeria via a 6 Key Component namely: **2023ElectionCourtTracking.NG/ ElectionTribunalMonitoring/ JusticePal app/ PerceptionPollSurvey/ Justice yarn and MediaCourtRepoerters' gang** as we call for a Live Broadcast for the 2023 General Elections Court Proceedings.*

Background/Introduction:

As part of our mandate in deepening democracy, justice and good governance inter alia via transparency, accountability and active citizens' participation cum access to justice especially for the 2023 general elections, the Speak Out Africa Initiative (SOAI) has launched **FixJustice.NG** project with a view to garner support for the judiciary in wielding and rebuilding perceived breach of trust & confidence on the part of the Nigeria citizens towards our hallowed court.

Like we know, public trust and confidence in our government institutions is critical to the functioning of any democratic republic but that of the courts and judiciary is a central tenet of the rule of law and often seen as the oxygen for any democracy that wants to thrive hence, its description as the "last hope of common man".

Among current ragging controversy, it is important we emphasize that judiciary is part of the democracy and by extension the electoral process, and never an interloper as some misconstrued. Thus, though the electoral umpire INEC did the first part which many believed fall below expectations and known standards; the remaining part of the 2023 election task now rest with the judiciary and we are confident to say that the RIGHT THING SHALL BE DONE despite aspersions & attempt by politicians to paint the image of the court in bad light – that would not be given credence by the good citizens of Nigeria and at the same time, our justice system should stand tall in dispensing justice without fear or favour to strengthen the justice system in Nigeria even as citizens and the world look up to them.

The judiciary's constitutional responsibility to determine the outcome of election cases has always elicited mixed reactions. The Petitioner who succeeds will always applaud the judiciary for a well-done job, while the Respondent may make a few sketching remarks about the judgment and sometimes the judge.

However, concerns over bias in the courts appear prominently in the current day Nigeria vis-a-vis public trust. This has informed our decision through the assistance of our development partners to birth this epoch project so as to wield the disconnection, re-build & help regain public trust and confidence. Hence, the launch of [#FixJustice.NG](#) project today.

The Objective:

The [FixJustice.NG](#) project is a justice-focused project aimed at instilling public trust and confidence in the courts/ judiciary and fostering accountability; with a view to ultimately end perceived incidences of electoral judicial compromise thus, heralding a new reform in the administration of electoral justice & accountability in Nigeria in gaining political stability and legitimacy. Hence, strengthens access to justice by citizens especially the marginalized.

Commendation to Judiciary:

Before we begin to highlight a few of the challenges and offer solutions to them, it is necessary to commend the judiciary and our court for their good work; for some of the decision it has taken that has reinforced faith in its determination and capability to effectively manage the electoral processes adjudication. Among there many achievements; Is the timely review/signing of Election Judicial Proceedings Practice Directions, 2022, which will serve as a guide to all stakeholders in providing an improved and efficient electoral adjudicatory process in order to be in tune with the new Electoral Act, 2022 – this has again strengthened citizens’ confidence in the judiciary. As human, we are quick to point at challenges forgetting often the success but our work is to give a balance view. For example, our judiciary had given landmark judgement in time past and recent; such as the case of Bayelsa (Douye Diri-February 2020), Zamfara (Matawalle-May, 2019), Edo (Oshomole-2008) Gubernatorial and others even against all odds. This should receive accolade. This remains a plus for the judiciary. In addition, we have seen the National judicial council (NJC) sanctioned and whip the big stick on erring judges most recent is the Adamawa state chief justice.

On the other hand, no one seem to be talking about the many challenges of the judiciary which has contributed immensely to their plight especially in the court of public opinion. Issues like judicial welfare, inadequate funding and delay in release of funds to the judiciary are one among many challenges confronting them, and yet the judiciary still lives above board in the dispensation of justice (though not widely accepted) – It’s high time stakeholders like CSOs, citizens stepped up to speak out in favour, especially as judiciary are constrained to speak for themselves in this regard and yet has these needs not been met. This we believe will strengthen our justice system by creating conducive working atmosphere for them to thrive.

Our Six (6) Components’ FixJustice.NG solutions:

1. [2023ElectionCourtTracking.NG/](#) We intend to launch people-driven 2023 election court viewing portal to create space for up-to-date information, transparency and wider participation.
2. [ElectionTribunalMonitoring/](#) This entails deploying our monitors to observe, track and report back court proceedings and election tribunal sittings across the nation.

3. **JusticePal app**/ This is a friendly-easy-to-use mobile app for citizens to download and use in following up election proceedings progress and updates real-time.
4. **PerceptionPollSurvey**/ This is a scientific poll to be carried out to collect data and analyze for possible justice reform as well as strengthen the administration of electoral justice & accountability in Nigeria.
5. **Justice yarn**/ This is a street-driven participatory interaction to gather opinions of the common man whose last hope is the judiciary.
6. **MediaCourtRepoerters' gang**/ This involves training and capacity building for assigned media personnel who will participates in 2023 election court proceedings.

From the foregoing, there is no doubt the 2023 election major setbacks was lack of TRANSPARENCY AND FLAGRANT DISREGARD TO LAWS/GUIDELINES, it will then be to the best interest of the nation that the judiciary ensure no trust deficit issue arise the second time in terms of transparency, accountability and adherence to established laws, policies/guidelines as they decide the fate of over 200million Nigerians. This must be upheld in all honesty.

Furthermore, we use this avenue to caution politicians who makes utterances that are inimical to the image of our judiciary & justice system in general, to desist from such dastardly act as the citizens already know that is their last antics to suffocate our hard earned democracy if they succeed in cascading the judiciary. Nigeria will not accept nor align with such antics in any guise whatsoever. More so, the judiciary should rise above board to defend our democracy and earn peoples trust and confidence by delivering policy-based judgement that is seen impartial, unbiased and free from many undue interferences. By this, history will be fair to us!

for: SPEAK OUT AFRICA [SOA} INITIATIVE,

Kenneth Eze, cpm

(Lead Director)

Abuja Nigeria

Dated this 17th Day of April, 2023.

... lending a voice in transforming election justice in Nigeria

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