



## **NDDC: Senator Nwaobosi sues Buhari's aide, Mrs Onochie**

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### **NIGERIA: -**

The face-off between supporters of the Interim Management Committee (IMC) of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and those who want the management probed for alleged financial impropriety has led to litigation on alleged defamation of character.

One party in the face-off, Senator Peter Nwaoboshi, has sued Mrs Laretta Onochie, Senior Special Assistant to President Muhammadu Buhari, for alleged defamation of character on social media while siding the IMC on its refusal to appear before the ad hoc committee of the Senate, mandated to probe N40 billion allegedly squandered by the Commission between January and March this year.

This comes as the Senate called on security agencies to unravel the alleged forgery of a letter to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) at the instance of the Deputy President of the Senate, Ovie Omo-Agege for purported probe of the Minister of Niger Delta Affairs, Senator Godswill Akpabio.

In a letter of litigation written to Mrs Onochie on Tuesday in Abuja by solicitors to Nwaoboshi, she was given 48 hours to retract all her alleged disparaging comments against Nwaoboshi as regards contracts from NDDC or face litigation immediately.

'Consequent upon your unsubstantiated allegations against, our client, he demands that you publish/post a retraction on all your social media platforms and tender an unreserved apology to him within forty-eight hours from the day of delivery of this letter.

'Take note that if you fail to comply with the demands as stated above, we have our client's instructions to take legal action against you without further recourse to you. A stitch in time saves nine,' Nwaoboshi's solicitors threatened.

The solicitors who are Bwala&Co of the Crystal Chambers and Daniel Hassan Bwala of Lincoln's Inn London in the letter dated 9th June 2020 and addressed to Mrs Onochie, chronicled all her alleged disparaging comments against Nwaoboshi and demanded a retraction and apology within 48 hours.

The letter, titled "Defamatory Publication by you against the Chairman, Senate Committee on Niger Delta Affairs, Senator Peter Nwaoboshi", reads in part:

'We are Solicitors to Sen Peter Nwaoboshi, Chairman Senate Committee on NDDC hereinafter called "Our Client", on whose instructions we write you on the relative above.

'Our Client informed us and we verily believe him that; On the 8th day of June 2020, you posted/published a defamatory article on your Facebook page (Lauretta Onochie) against our client captioned "NDDC- THE CHICKEN COMES HOME TO ROOST" appearing on your page as follows, amongst other.

'I was at an event in his home town when he spoke in our Anioma language, declaring himself a thief. I am an Ada Anioma. I was raised in Anioma land. We do not take what belongs to others, let alone pride ourselves in being thieves.

'The question Senator Nwaoboshi has refused to answer is to tell Niger Delta citizens and Nigerians his role in the

award of contracts for the provision of 4,800 plastic desks and chairs for primary/secondary schools in nine (9) states of the Niger Delta in 2016 with the award of contract letters dated 22nd September 2016.

'The contract sum was for N3.6 billion naira. The revelations in the award of the said contract are mind-boggling, disturbing and appalling, using eleven different companies and business names which were awarded the contract are owned by or traceable to one and the same person being Sen Peter Nwaoboshi.

'The said companies/business names are Noan Integrated Services; De Towers Constructions & Allied Services Ltd; Franstine Nigeria Enterprises; Edrihide Company; Isumabe U.K. Global; Benchmark Construction at Allied Services Millstone Allied Builders Ltd.; Nelpat Nigeria Company; Agh-Rown Ventures; Edendoma Star International; and Antlers Construction and Allied Works Ltd.

'The inventory records show that these items were supplied and received on Senator Nwaoboshi's business premises and warehouse, not to the beneficiaries. Meanwhile, the contracts were awarded to him.

'However, some of the items supplied to Nwaoboshi's warehouse through his cronies were later resold to the Delta state government, while the others were sold to other states through contracts awarded to him.

'All supply agreements were signed by one and the same person being Mr Agbamuche Nelson, traceable to Senator Nwaoboshi. This is in flagrant contravention of section 58(4) (a) and (d) of the Public Procurement Act.

'No wonder Sen Nwaoboshi and his cohorts are jittery about the ongoing Forensic Audit exercise in the NDCC and are doing everything possible to derail it.

'That our client believes that this publication by you against him is meant to ridicule his image all because you occupy an important position in the government of President Buhari in relation to social media. so that whatever you

posted or shared should be taken as the position of the President and therefore your post/publications would be believed by others.

'That our client believes that this publication/ post about him is meant to be understood and was understood by reasonable and right-thinking members of the public that he is: a thief as you called him in your Facebook post, Corrupt and a criminal; Abusing his office and not fit to represent the good people of Delta North senatorial district, Committing atrocities as Chairman Senate Committee on Niger Delta and not a man of integrity.

'That this publication was made/posted by you mischievously and maliciously. To say the least, the said libellous post is calculated to undermine him knowing that the Senate is carrying out a probe of the NDDC.

'That it is our client's belief that for you to call him a thief without being convicted by a court of law has not only maligned his image but also has ridiculed his integrity.

'That it is only a competent court of law that can pronounce someone a thief when the person is found guilty of a crime.

'That there is no doubt that your Facebook posts/publications enjoy wide readership throughout Nigeria and globally as Special Assistant to Nigeria's President on social media.

'To have maligned disparaged and tarnished his reputation, integrity and image both in his official and personal capacity is not only condemnable but punishable.'

Meanwhile, the leadership of the Senate on Tuesday asked some security agencies to wade in and expose those who forged the letterhead of its Clerk to do a purported letter allegedly written by Deputy President of the Senate, Ovie Omo-Agege, to the EFCC against the Minister of Niger Delta Affairs, Godswill Akpabio.

Daily Sun gathered that the Senate Clerk had told the Senate leadership that his letterhead was forged by unknown persons to do the letter to the EFCC.

Relying on this information, the Senate leadership was said to have instructed some security agencies including the EFCC to investigate the actual source of the letter.

Sen Omo-Agege, denying his authorisation for the letter, had made it clear that a letter said to have emanated from the Clerk of the Senate acting on his behalf and requesting the Chairman of the anti-graft agency, Mr Ibrahim Magu, to investigate the Minister, was fake.

Omo-Agege's statement, which was released to journalists on Sunday, reads:

'The attention of the Office of the Deputy President of the Senate has been drawn to a letter dated 7th May 2020, purportedly written by the Clerk of the Senate acting on behalf of the Office of Deputy President of the Senate requesting the Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to investigate and monitor the Honourable Minister of Niger Delta Affairs and one other.

'This Office hereby states that the said letter is false, fake, malicious, mischievous and vexatious.

'This Office never instructed the Clerk of the Senate, or in fact any person, to write to or contacts the EFCC in relation to any person.

'In the light of the foregoing, we wish to urge the public to disregard the fake letter, same being the handiwork of a person or persons with criminal intents.'

