

PRESS RELEASE

26 June 2025

NJC recommends 21 candidates for Judicial Appointment

- **Ten (10) Judges on compulsory retirement**
- **Clears nine (9) Imo Judges from age falsification allegation**
- **Reiterates earlier directive to Imo State Governor to swear in the most Senior Judge as acting Chief Judge**
- **Bars National Industrial Court Judge from Promotion for 3 Years**
- **Issues warning/caution to five Judges**

The National Judicial Council at its 109th Meeting presided over by the Honourable, the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Hon. Justice Kudirat M. O. Kekere-Ekun, GCON, held on 25 June 2025 has recommended two Hon. Judges for appointment as Heads of Court for Ekiti and Yobe States, respectively.

The Heads of Court are: Hon. Justice Adekanye Lekan Ogunmoye, Chief Judge, Ekiti State and Hon. Kadi Abba Mammadi as Grand Kadi, Yobe State.

Similarly, Council has also recommended Mainasara Ibrahim Kogo Umar, Esq. to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, for appointment as Chairman, Code of Conduct Tribunal.

The recommendations followed a careful consideration of various public complaints made against shortlisted candidates for the various positions and a rigorous interview by an 8-Member Interview Committee of the Council in line with the 2023 Revised NJC Guidelines and Procedural Rules for Appointment of Judicial Officers.

The remaining successful 18 candidates who were recommended for appointment as Judges for different Jurisdictions are as follows:

TWO HIGH COURT JUDGES FOR CROSS RIVER STATE

- i) Edu, Glory Bassey
- ii) Irem, Melody Bassey

THREE HIGH COURT JUDGES FOR OGUN STATE

- i) Ojikutu, Adebayo Julius
- ii) Adewole, Adejumo Oluwatoyin
- iii) Adebo, Oluyemisi Olukemi

THREE HIGH COURT JUDGES FOR ZAMFARA STATE

- i) Garba, Sirajo Aliyu
- ii) Bashir, Rabi
- iii) Abdullahi, Nasiru

THREE KADIS FOR SHARIA COURT OF APPEAL, ZAMFARA STATE

- i) Ibrahim, Jibril
- ii) Muhammed, Sanusi Magami
- iii) Shaa'ban Mansur

ONE KADI FOR SHARIA COURT OF APPEAL, PLATEAU STATE

- i) Badamasi, Kabir Adam

ONE JUDGE FOR CUSTOMARY COURT OF APPEAL, EBONYI STATE

- i) Ogodo, Lynda Nneka

FOUR HIGH COURT JUDGES FOR KATSINA STATE

- i) Dikko, Fadila Muhammad
- ii) Abdulrahman, Shamsudden Yammama
- iii) Abdullahi, Maryham Umaru
- iv) Mohammed, Abubakar Dikko

It would be recalled that the Council had at its 108th Meeting held on 29 and 30 April 2025, approved a new policy to publish the names of candidates for consideration for appointment as Judicial Officers and invited public input.

A flurry of 86 public comments and complaints were received by the Council and 73 of them were favourable representing 85%, while 13 were adverse representing 15%.

However, out of the Thirteen (13) complaints, Five (5) had no accompanying verifying affidavits in breach of the publication guidelines and were not considered.

In view of the Council's resolution, at its 27th Emergency Meeting held on 3 February 2025, relating to the appointment of the Chief Judge, Ekiti State, Council did not consider the Three (3) complaints relating thereto.

Five (5) complaints were considered against the appointment relating to the High Courts of Plateau and Kano States and the Sharia Courts of Appeal of Zamfara and Katsina States.

Flowing from this, Council dismissed Four (4) of the complaints, but found merit in one and dropped the affected candidate.

Furthermore, the Council has approved the voluntary retirement of the following Judicial Officers:

i) Hon. Justice Babatunde Ademola Bakre of the Ogun State High Court.

ii) Hon. Justice H. O. Ajayi of the Kwara State High Court.

In another development, the Council has recommended compulsory retirement of ten Judges of Imo State Judiciary.

Nine (9) of the affected Judges of the Imo State Judiciary were found to have altered their dates of birth in their official records in order to confer on themselves the undue advantage of staying longer in service while the other Judicial Officer, Hon. Justice T. N. Nzeukwu was found to have made himself available to be sworn in as acting Chief Judge of Imo State High Court knowing fully well that he was number four in the hierarchy of Judges of the Imo State Judiciary and contrary to Section 271

(4) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, as amended.

The nine Judges found to have falsified their records, comprising five (5) High Court Judges and four Judges of the Customary Court of Appeal, Imo State are:

1. Hon Justice M. E. Nwagboso (High Court)
2. Hon Justice B. C. Iheka (High Court)
3. Hon Justice K. A. Leaweanya (High Court)
4. Hon Justice Okereke Chinyere Ngozi (High Court)
5. Hon Justice Innocent Chidi Ibeawuchi (High Court)
6. Hon Justice Tennyson Nze (Customary Court of Appeal)
7. Hon Justice Ofoha Uchenna (Customary Court of Appeal)
8. Hon Justice Everyman Eleanya (Customary Court of Appeal)
9. Hon Justice Rosemond Ibe (Customary Court of Appeal)

Hon. Justice T. N. Nzeukwu was sanctioned for making himself available to be sworn into office as acting Chief Judge of Imo State.

The President of the Customary Court of Appeal, Imo State, Hon Justice V. U. Okorie who chaired the Commission that nominated Hon. Justice Nzeukwu as acting Chief Judge was however absolved, having dissented on record against the recommendation to appoint Hon. Justice T. N. Nzeukwu as acting Chief Judge.

Council however reiterated its earlier direction to the Imo State Governor, Senator Hope Uzodinma to swear in the most Senior Judge of the State as the acting Chief Judge.

Council took the decision after consideration of the reports of its Investigation Committee on allegations of age falsification against eighteen (18) Judges of the Imo state judiciary on the

one hand and the queries issued to Hon. Justices V. U. Okorie and T. N. Nzeukwu.

The Council however dismissed, for want of merit, similar allegations against three Judges of the State High Court whose dates of birth were found to bear no discrepancy.

Six High Court Judges of the State, whose dates of birth either had discrepancies but with acceptable explanations or with discrepancies arising from genuine correction of their dates of birth to their disadvantage, were also exonerated.

The Judges whose dates of birth were found to bear no discrepancy are:

1. Hon Justice I. O. Agugua (High Court)
2. Hon Justice C. A. Ononeze-Madu (High Court)
3. Hon Justice L. C. Azuama (High Court)

The two Judges given a clean bill of health owing to provision of acceptable explanation for discrepancies in their dates of birth are:

1. Hon Justice Vincent I. Onyeka (High Court)
2. Hon Justice Vivian O. B. Ekezie (High Court)

Council directed that Hon. Justice Onyeka and Hon. Justice Ekezie must maintain the date of birth supplied by the Council of Legal Education in their official records.

Four other Judges were absolved on the ground that they genuinely corrected their dates of birth to their disadvantage are:

1. Hon Justice P. U. Nnodum (High Court)
2. Hon. Justice Alma Ngozi Eluwa (High Court)
3. Hon. Justice Matthew Chinedu Ijezie (High Court)
4. Hon Justice Ononogbo Chidi Linus (High Court)

The Council has also reiterated its earlier direction to the Governor of Imo State, Senator Hope Uzodinma, to appoint the most Senior Judicial Officer as the acting Chief Judge of the Imo State High Court.

Council, in further deliberation, barred a Judge of the National Industrial Court, Hon. Justice Isaac J. Essien, from being considered for promotion to a Higher Court for three years due to misconduct.

Council found that Hon. Justice Essien wrongly ordered the confiscation of over ₦1 billion belonging to the Nasarawa State Government and its Local Government Councils, despite being aware that there was a pending appeal and a pending application for stay of execution.

Council also noted that he refused to step aside from the case after the Nasarawa State Government raised concerns about possible bias.

Hon. Justice Essien was a former staff member of the State University, which owed him gratuity, and he had earlier demanded payment using the official letterhead of the Court — a clear breach of Code of Conduct for Judicial Officers.

Council further criticized him for personally visiting the Court of Appeal registry to confirm if an appeal had been filed in the case — an action considered highly inappropriate for a Judge.

His Lordship was found to have violated several rules in the Revised Code of Conduct for Judicial Officers and was **reprimanded** and **barred** from elevation to a higher judicial office for a period of (3) three years.

Council also considered the reports of its Preliminary Complaints Assessment Committees, which contained a total number of 30 petitions against various Judicial Officers. Four (4) Committees were empanelled for further investigation, four

(4) Judges were **cautioned**, while 22 petitions were dismissed for lacking in merit.

Council **cautioned** Hon. Justice Rahman A. Oshodi, over misuse of judicial discretion in Suit No. ID/232/53C/23.

Hon. Justice Daniel Okungbowa, Chief Judge Edo State was also **cautioned** over abuse of his judicial discretion in Suit No. B1/555/2020 and was advised to exercise his discretion judicially and judiciously in future.

Council issued a **final warning** to Hon. Justice G. B. Okolosi of the Delta State High Court for continued flouting of Section 294 (1) of the 1999 Constitution and Hon. Justice Sa'adatu I. Mark, Federal High Court received **caution** for delivering judgment after the constitutional 90 days.

Petition against Chief Judge, Benue State, Hon. Justice M.

A. Ikpambese:

Council deliberated on the report of the investigation Committee in respect of three petitions by Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, Fidelis Bensen Mnyim, Guana Benjamin Joseph, Esq., and Terhemem Ngbea respectively against Hon. Justice M. A. Ikpambese and absolved the Chief Judge from any judicial wrong doings, the petitions having been found to be lacking in merit.

It noted that all the petitions presented against him were with sole aim to remove him from his position as the Chief Judge.

Council was particularly concerned about the role of the Attorney-General of the State, Fidelis Bensen Mnyim, Esq., in the scheme to remove the Chief Judge and resolved to report him to the Legal Practitioners' Disciplinary Committee (LPDC) for necessary action.

Council dismissed petitions against four other Judges:

1. Hon. Justice A. M. Liman of the Federal High Court, Kano Division (Petition by Abdullahi Baffa Bichi)
2. Hon. Justice S. A. Amobeda (Petition by Abdullahi Baffa Bichi)
3. Hon. Justice Muhammad Auwal Haruna (Petition by Abdulrazaq Banaru Abubakar)
4. Hon. Justice Binta Fatima Murtala Nyako (Petition by Kabiru S. Chafe)

The joint petition against Hon. Justices A. M. Liman and S. A. Amobeda, and the petition against Hon. Justice Muhammad Auwal Haruna were withdrawn and accordingly dismissed.

Hon. Justice Binta Fatima Murtala Nyako was exonerated as the Council found no merit in the petition accusing her of

delaying judgment and issuing an order on a property while the case was ongoing.

Further action was suspended in respect of petitions against Hon. Justice A. M. Liman by Kenneth Okere (in a different case) and Hon. Justice Yusuf Halilu of the FCT High Court for being *sub judice*.

The Council, however blacklisted one Peter N. Ekemezie a serial petitioner from presenting further petitions before it.

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