

## Weekly Updates on the **#EndSARS Judicial Panels of Inquiry – No. 14**



15th February - 22nd February 2021

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The Judicial Panels of Inquiry set up across Nigeria to investigate the excesses of the Nigeria Police Force and other security agencies have continued sittings in the FCT and these 12 states in the week under review - Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Benue, Ekiti, Imo, Kaduna, Lagos, Ondo, Osun, Oyo and Plateau.

In the FCT and 18 states, the Judicial Panels of Inquiry have closed submission of petitions and Panels in Adamawa, Niger, Katsina, Kwara and Rivers States have concluded sittings/hearings and their recommendations are to be submitted to the government for implementation.

The ongoing Judicial Panels of Inquiry provide an opportunity for the Nigerian government at the federal and state levels to meet major yearnings of Nigerians, which is justice for all victims and survivors of police brutality and implementation of the eventual recommendations of the Judicial Panels.

On February 19, 2021 the Ekiti State Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, Hon. Olawale Fapohunda stated the readiness of the Ekiti State Government to pay over N7 million compensation to 24 petitioners as recommended by the Ekiti State Judicial Panel of Inquiry. The Attorney General who made this known during a visit to the Panel sitting at Ado Ekiti, expressed the gratitude of the state government to the panel members who are working assiduously on the state government mandate despite some challenges. Fapohunda stated that the state governor, Dr. John Kayode Fayemi will not wait until the panel submits its final report before processing the implementation of the recommendations.

Similarly, on February 19, 2021, the Lagos State Judicial Panel of Inquiry on Restitution for Victims of SARS Related Abuses and Other Matters presented a cheque of N10 million each to the family of Mr. Adebayo Abayomi over the murder of his mother who was killed by the bullets fired as a result of indiscriminate shooting by SARS operatives at Railway Line, Mushin and Mrs Hannah Olugbodi whose leg was badly damaged and required further surgeries as a result of indiscriminate shooting by SARS operatives at Ijesha, Lagos. Apart from the monetary award to the victims of SARS abuses, the Panel also made recommendations for the prosecution of the erring SARS operatives as well as regular training for policemen on the handling of firearms in a civilized society.

Yiaga Africa and Enough is Enough Nigeria (EiE)'s observation of the Panels of Inquiry will continue to provide information to promote transparency and accountability and build citizens' confidence in the process.

# Findings from the period under review include:

## **1 Submission and Public Presentation of Judicial Panel of Inquiry Reports:**

In the five (5) states where the Panels have completed the hearings - Adamawa, Katsina, Kwara, Niger, and Rivers, our findings indicate that the reports of the Judicial Panels on Inquiry have neither been submitted or publicly presented to the the state government for the implementation of their recommendations. The lack of information on the status of the Reports could potentially prevent citizens from publicly accessing the final report of the Panels and engaging with relevant stakeholders towards the implementation of the recommendations of the Panels. As Panels begin to conclude sittings and prepare their reports and recommendations, it is important to use media and public-facing channels to disseminate the reports and recommendations for citizen engagement and advocacy for implementation.

## **2 7 States yet to Constitute Judicial Panels of Inquiry, 2 States yet to resume sittings:**

Yiaga Africa and EiE Nigeria further note the consistent refusal of 7 States who are yet to constitute Judicial Panels of Inquiry. These states are Borno, Jigawa, Kano, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara. While the seven states were part of the collective National Economic Council (NEC) decision to establish the Panels, their actions reinforce the notion that the need to engage in meaningful security sector reform is not a national concern. In Anambra State, the Panel is yet to resume sitting from the Christmas and New Year break. The youth representatives on the Panel accused the state government of failing to provide the Panel with the necessary logistics and support it needed to function effectively. In a statement conveying their displeasure, five members of the Anambra State Judicial Panel of Inquiry resigned their appointment as members of the Panel. In Kogi State, the Panel is yet to hold an inaugural sitting despite the constitution of the Panel.

## **3 Petitions Submitted across the Country and Conclusion of Sittings:**

Data from the Panels show the following number of petitions submitted across the states and the FCT, while observer reports indicate that Judicial Panels of Inquiry have closed submission of petitions in the FCT and 18 states. In Adamawa, Niger, Katsina, Kwara and Rivers States, the Panels have concluded sittings/hearings and the recommendations of the Panels are to be submitted to the government for implementation.

State	No. Of Petitions of Submitted	End Date for Submission of Petitions	End Date for Panel Sittings/Hearings
Abia State	87	December 9, 2020	May 10, 2021
Adamawa State	14	December 11, 2020	January 27, 2021
Akwa Ibom	159	Ongoing	Undecided
Anambra State	310	November 26, 2020	Undecided
Bauchi State	19	Ongoing	Undecided
Bayelsa State	41	Ongoing	April 2021
Benue State	51	Ongoing	Undecided
Cross River State	75	December 22, 2020	April 30, 2021
Delta State	85	November 26, 2020	Undecided
Ebonyi State	55	Ongoing	May, 2021
Edo State	167	November 27, 2020	March 8, 2021
Ekiti State	85	November 30, 2020	Undecided
Enugu State	75	Ongoing	Undecided
FCT Abuja	285	December 31, 2020	Undecided
Gombe State	15	February 2, 2021	Undecided
Imo State	144	December 14, 2020	Undecided
Kaduna State	49	Ongoing	Undecided
Katsina State	61	December 2020	January 6, 2021
Kwara State	24	December 1, 2020	January 27, 2021
Lagos State	230	December 22, 2020	Undecided
Nasarawa State	47	December 31, 2020	Undecided
Niger State	18	December, 2020	December 22, 2020
Ondo	75	February 8, 2021	Undecided
Ogun State	105	November 30, 2020	Undecided
Osun State	34	Ongoing	Undecided
Oyo State	78	Ongoing	Undecided
Plateau State	63	November 26, 2020	April 2021
Rivers State	188	January 13, 2021	January 26, 2021
Taraba State	31	February 28, 2021	March 29, 2021

■ States that have completed their panel sittings

# Yiaga Africa and EiE Nigeria note and recommend the following:

- 1. Resignation of Youth Representatives Negates the Intent of Balance and Fairness:** We note that the resignation of youth representatives at the Lagos and Anambra State Judicial Panels of Inquiry negates the intent of balance and fairness for the Panels. This also indicates a lack of confidence in the Judicial Panels of Inquiry to deliver justice especially for young citizens who peacefully protested and made a demand on the Federal Government of Nigeria to investigate complaints of police brutality and extra-judicial killings as well as deliver justice to all victims of the dissolved Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and other police and security units. Yiaga Africa and EiE Nigeria recommend that the Lagos and Anambra State Judicial Panels of Inquiry respond immediately and take appropriate action towards addressing the issues raised by the youth representatives in order to restore balance and fairness and restore citizens' confidence in the Panels to deliver justice.
- 2. Implementation of Yiaga Africa and EiE Nigeria's Recommendations on Compensation for Victims:** In the five (5) states where the Panels have completed the hearings - Adamawa, Katsina, Kwara, Niger, and Rivers, Yiaga Africa and EiE Nigeria have constantly recommended and advocated for compensation for victims of police brutality. We note the Panels' pursuit of justice and fairness for all parties, and recommend that more petitions be concluded and petitioners adequately compensated. The actions of the Lagos and Ekiti State Judicial Panels of Inquiry further buttresses that it is not until the panel submits its final report that its recommendations can begin to be processed for implementation. It is imperative that the state governors provide a timeline for a review of the recommendations and planned actions. A starting point will be to announce the set up of Victims' Funds to pay compensations to victims.
- 3. Citizen Engagement and Advocacy Towards Implementation of Panel Recommendations:** Citizen engagement is crucial to ensuring that the Panels remain committed to the process designed for victims to have their petitions heard and considered. In addition, with some state Panels concluding the process, it is important citizens remain active and committed to placing demands on the government to implement the recommendations from the Panels. We encourage citizens and organizations focused on good governance, justice, and police reform in the states where hearings have been completed to write to the Panels for a summary of its activities. They should also follow the actions of the state governments in response to the recommendations of the Panels.

Signed

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