

Indeed, Nigeria's Judiciary needs urgent cleansing

By Farida Mohammed Umar



I know that so many things are wrong with the Nigerian judiciary. But the PUNCH editorial of Tuesday, June 20, only exposed me to the level of rot in the country's judicial system. Truly, Nigeria's judiciary has become a cesspool of nauseating corruption. That is why, perhaps many do not consider it to be the last hope of the common man, again. Getting fair justice in our law courts is now an illusion for persons without heavy 'war chest' or deep pockets. Only the highest bidders get favourable and unbiased judgement. According to the editorial, a corrupt judicial system is a symptom of a fragile state, because corruption undermines all institutions. The editorial, in describing how fraudulent Nigeria's judiciary is, made reference to the recent disclosure by Adamu Bulkachuwa, who represented Bauchi North in the Ninth Senate. The editorial noted that, "His valedictory speech suggested that he may have influenced his wife, Zainab, a former president of the Court of Appeal, in "helping" lawmakers in their positions. To many Nigerians, it reinforced the widely held belief that the judiciary has been captured and is in urgent need of redemption.

"During the valedictory session of the Ninth Senate, the senator implied that he influenced the decisions of his wife in her judicial duties. "To those listening and to the entire world viewing the presentation that has since gone viral, the lawmaker expressly hinted that the judge may have used her position to favour his colleagues in the Senate. "I look at faces in this chamber who have come to me and sought my help when my wife was the President of

the Court of Appeal. And I must thank particularly, my wife, whose freedom and independence I encroached upon while she was in office, and she has been very tolerant and accepted my encroachment, and extended her help to my colleagues. "A visibly embarrassed Ahmad Lawan, presiding for the last time as Senate President, hushed up the elderly senator, saying his comments (read confession) were not appropriate for that forum. "He succeeded only at the third try. Days after, Bulkachuwa has tried to walk back on his words. He now says he was misunderstood, and blamed Lawan for not allowing him to fully articulate his thoughts". The embarrassing confession by Sen. Bulkachuwa has further dragged Nigeria, as a country, in the mud. Nevertheless, the federal government, and the National Judicial Commission, NJC, must assiduously work towards cleansing the judiciary's Augean stable.

To this end, the NJC, in particular, should come down hard on judges who undermine the law with reckless ex parte orders. They should be prosecuted and possibly kicked out of the system. Again, the Nigerian Bar Association, NBA, should also cleanse its ranks of lawyers whose stock in trade is facilitating bribes to judges. If all hands are on deck to excise corruption from the bench, then it will only be a matter of time for the dignity of the judiciary to be restored.

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