

NJC Slams 10 Judges with compulsory retirement over age falsification, ethical breaches

The National Judicial Council (NJC) has compulsorily retired 10 judges in Imo State for falsifying their ages and engaging in other unethical conduct. This decision followed the Council's 109th meeting held in Abuja and presided over by the Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN), Justice Kudirat Kekere-Ekun. In an official statement issued, the NJC revealed that the affected judges, comprising five from the High Court and four from the Customary Court of Appeal, altered their dates of birth in official records in a bid to illegally extend their tenure on the bench. The judges affected from the Imo State High Court are Justices M.E. Nwagboso, B.C. Iheka, K.A. Leaweanya, Chinyere Ngozi Okereke, and Innocent Chidi Ibeawuchi. From the Customary Court of Appeal, the judges retired are Justices Tennyson Nze, Uchenna Ofoha, Everyman Eleanya, and Rosemond Ibe. In a related disciplinary action, the Council also retired Justice T.N. Nzeukwu for accepting appointment as Acting Chief Judge of Imo State despite being fourth in seniority—a move which violated Section 271(4) of the 1999 Constitution.

The NJC reaffirmed its earlier directive to Imo State Governor, Senator Hope Uzodinma, to appoint the most senior judge in the state judiciary as Acting Chief Judge, in line with constitutional provisions. Meanwhile, Justice V.U. Okorie, President of the Imo Customary Court of Appeal, who chaired the commission that recommended Justice Nzeukwu, was cleared of any wrongdoing, having formally dissented during the nomination process. In other developments, the NJC recommended the appointment of 21 judicial officers across various jurisdictions. Among them are: Justice Adekanye Lekan Ogunmoye as Chief Judge of Ekiti State, Kadi Abba Mammadi as Grand Kadi of Yobe State, Mainasara Ibrahim Kogo Umar, Esq. as Chairman of the Code of Conduct Tribunal

Other recommendations include: Cross River High Court: Edu Glory Bassey, Irem Melody Bassey, Ogun High Court: Ojikutu Adebayo Julius, Adewole Adejumo Oluwatoyin, Adebo Oluyemisi Olukemi, Zamfara High Court: Garba Sirajo Aliyu, Bashir Rabi, Abdullahi Nasiru Zamfara Sharia Court of Appeal: Ibrahim Jibril, Muhammed Sanusi Magami, Shaa'ban Mansur Plateau Sharia Court of Appeal: Badamasi Kabir Adam Ebonyi Customary Court of Appeal:

Ogodo Lynda Nneka Katsina High Court: Dikko Fadila Muhammad, Abdulrahman Shamsudden Yammama, Abdullahi Maryham Umaru, Mohammed Abubakar Dikko.

In line with its April 2025 policy on transparency in judicial appointments, the Council disclosed that it had received 86 public responses regarding the shortlisted candidates. Of these, 73 were positive. Out of 13 adverse submissions, five were dismissed due to procedural lapses. Separately, the NJC barred Justice Isaac J. Essien of the National Industrial Court from consideration for elevation for three years. His infractions included issuing a confiscation order on N1 billion belonging to the Nasarawa State Government despite a pending appeal and stay of execution. He was also found to have used the court's letterhead for personal purposes and personally visited a court registry to verify an appeal—actions the Council deemed “grossly inappropriate.”



Other disciplinary measures taken include: Justice Rahman A. Oshodi (Lagos): Cautioned for improper exercise of discretion (Suit No. ID/232/53C/23) Justice Daniel Okungbowa, Chief Judge of Edo State: Warned over misuse of discretion (Suit No. B1/555/2020) Justice G.B. Okolosi (Delta State): Given a final warning for repeated

breaches of Section 294(1) of the Constitution Justice Sa'adatu I. Mark (Federal High Court): Cautioned for late delivery of judgment beyond the 90-day constitutional timeframe. The Council also dismissed petitions against four judges—Justices A.M. Liman, S.A. Amobeda, Muhammad Auwal Haruna, and Binta Fatima Murtala Nyako—for lack of merit or voluntary withdrawal by the petitioners. Similarly, Justice M.A. Ikpambese, Chief Judge of Benue State, was cleared of any wrongdoing. However, the NJC resolved to report the state's Attorney-General, Fidelis Bensen Mnyim, to the Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee (LPDC) for attempting to improperly influence judicial proceedings. In a move to stem frivolous complaints, the NJC blacklisted a frequent petitioner, Peter N. Ekemezie, barring him from submitting further petitions. Additionally, the Council accepted the voluntary retirements of Justice Babatunde Ademola Bakre (Ogun State High Court) and Justice H.O. Ajayi (Kwara State High Court).