

Akpabio must ensure transparency, public participation in legislative works - CISLAC

By Chimezie Godfrey



The Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) has urged the leadership of the National Assembly to prioritize transparency, openness, legislative participation, and fairness in conducting their legislative activities and advancing their agenda. In a statement signed by Comrade Auwal Musa Rafsanjani, the Executive Director of CISLAC, the call was a response to concerns expressed by Senators about the Senate's leadership, under Godswill Akpabio, fast-tracking the passage of bills without adequate public hearings and debates, despite the requirement for two-thirds of legislators to be present before a bill is passed. Senator Ali Ndume of Borno South remarked on this issue, stating, "You are passing bills without prior notification, even money bills, without anyone's contribution and within 2 hours. This is not good for Nigeria, and history will judge you." Rafsanjani emphasized, "While expediting the legislative process is essential, it's equally important to ensure meaningful input from legislators and Nigerians. A bill passed without sufficient involvement of the people can result in a significant deficit for Nigerians."

"Senators and House of Representatives members must ensure that the NASS leadership considers popular views before passing legislation to uphold transparency and accountability. "The general public should be invited to participate in public hearings, as they are stakeholders whose views should be heard and respected. If the Senate leadership, under Akpabio, undermines this, it implies a limitation on the functions of the Senate." He continued,

"The relationship between the legislature and the executive should not merely be a rubber stamp. The legislature should play a critical role and scrutinize every legal framework presented to them. Speedy passage of bills does not define legislative activism; other responsibilities, such as oversight and public hearings, must also be prioritized to enhance the quality of life for Nigerians." "Legislative bills should not be pursued based on personal and selfish interests, but they should reflect the aspirations of Nigerians," he added.

CISLAC calls on NASS to adhere to its legislative activities with a focus on openness and transparency, aiming to boost Nigerians' trust and confidence in the legislative process and the legislature's ability to effectively carry out their duties in line with NASS rules. Additionally, CISLAC urges the executive not to intimidate the legislature but to engage them in meaningful debates and discussions, allowing them to fulfill their functions in participatory democracy. The legislature should welcome meaningful stakeholder engagement and set aside personal and private interests that may undermine their work. The general public is encouraged to actively participate in National Assembly public hearings, engage in research, and provide legislative support to enable the legislature to effectively carry out their activities. Furthermore, Ministries, Departments, and Agencies are urged to honor invitations from the legislature, promoting effective activity and reducing duplication and waste in budgetary allocations.