

# The Fall of Two Legal Titans

By H. Y. Poloma

They were once hailed as titans—revered, feared, and cloaked in the silk of the Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN). But today, Chief Mike Ozekhome, SAN, and Professor Joash Amupitan, SAN, stand brutally unmasked: not as champions of justice, but as frauds who have shamelessly dragged both legal practice and legal teaching through the gutter. This is no minor scandal. It is a national disgrace—a raw, festering wound that exposes the rotten core of a profession already drowning in public contempt. In a nation gasping for credible institutions, these two Senior Advocates have proven themselves utterly unprincipled, ethically bankrupt, and devoid of any shred of integrity. They are not victims of persecution. They are architects of their own infamy. And their spectacular fall should serve as a searing indictment of everything wrong with Nigeria's Bar and academia. For decades, Chief Mike Ozekhome paraded as a fearless human rights crusader—a constitutional oracle who lectured Nigerians on justice while wrapped in silk and self-righteousness. Today, the mask is off. He stands revealed as a common document forger, accused by the Federal Government of brazen criminality in a sleazy London property grab.

The Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and the Attorney-General of the Federation have slammed him with criminal charges—multiple counts of forgery, making false documents, and the dishonest use of a forged Nigerian international passport. Ozekhome is accused of knowingly peddling a fake passport in the name of “Shani Tali” to lay claim to a prime London property at 79 Randall Avenue before a UK tribunal. Even after one set of charges was withdrawn, fresh 12-count charges landed like a thunderclap—underscoring the gravity of the allegations. Let no one call this a technicality. A Senior Advocate of Nigeria—an officer of the court sworn to uphold truth—allegedly manufactured and deployed forged identity documents for personal gain. In any serious jurisdiction, such conduct would trigger instant disbarment and public humiliation. Yet in Nigeria, the Nigerian Bar Association and the Body of Senior Advocates remain largely mute, as if ethical rot at the top is simply business as usual. Ozekhome's hypocrisy is nauseating. The same man who thundered against corruption and impunity now allegedly wallows in the very filth he condemned. His actions do not merely tarnish his reputation—they cheapen the SAN rank, erode public faith in the entire legal profession, and teach impressionable young lawyers that if a celebrated senior can allegedly forge passports for property, then ethics are for fools. Legal practice in Nigeria was already viewed with deep cynicism; Ozekhome has poured acid on the wound. He has turned the noble gown into a costume for deceit.

If Ozekhome has soiled legal practice, Professor Joash Amupitan, SAN has inflicted an even deeper, more insidious wound—on legal education and national institutions. Once a law professor and Dean at the University of Jos, Amupitan was entrusted with shaping the moral and intellectual character of future lawyers. Instead, he stands accused of presiding over academic fraud of the worst kind. Former Minister Solomon Dalung—who knew Amupitan as both



student and colleague—has publicly eviscerated him, declaring without mercy: “The Amupitan I know has no integrity.” Dalung alleges that during Amupitan's tenure as Dean (2009–2010), 16 deserving students had their hard-earned 2:1 results “traded off,” while politically connected or absentee students—including

senior security officers—were allegedly handed the same honours on a silver platter. Dalung claims he sacrificed his own master's pursuit just to battle this injustice. This is not petty gossip. A law professor allegedly manipulating grades turns the faculty into a marketplace of favours, where merit dies and connections reign. What poisonous lesson does this impart to students? That integrity is optional. That justice is negotiable. That the law classroom itself is a theatre of deceit. Legal teaching is meant to forge principled advocates; Amupitan stands accused of forging results instead. Then came the final insult. His elevation to Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has only magnified the catastrophe. Dogged by questions over his neutrality, Amupitan faces repeated accusations of bias, selective enforcement of court orders, and contempt proceedings. Opposition parties, including the African Democratic Congress, have demanded his resignation, citing partisan interference. A law professor and SAN who allegedly cannot uphold basic judicial respect while overseeing national elections is not a guardian of democracy—he is a liability to it.

The spectacle is grotesque: a man accused of academic manipulation now sits atop the body charged with ensuring credible polls. If the teacher lacks integrity, why should anyone trust the umpire? The near-simultaneous exposure of Ozekhome and Amupitan is no accident. It is a mirror held up to the moral decay eating Nigeria's legal institutions alive. The SAN rank—once a badge of excellence and probity—now risks becoming a punchline. When senior figures can allegedly forge documents or rig academic results with little consequence, the message to the younger generation is toxic: prestige trumps principle. Power excuses everything. The Nigerian Bar Association, the Council of Legal Education, and the Body of Senior Advocates owe the nation urgent, decisive action—disciplinary probes, potential revocation of SAN status, and genuine reform. Silence in the face of such scandals is not prudence. It is complicity. Ozekhome and Amupitan have not simply embarrassed themselves. They have contemptuously brought both legal practice and legal teaching into utter disrepute at a moment when Nigeria can least afford it. Their alleged conduct mocks every upright judge, honest practitioner, and dedicated lecturer still fighting to uphold standards in obscurity. The legal community must purge these disgraced elements or admit that its vaunted role as guardian of justice is nothing more than a self-serving lie. Until real accountability is delivered—through swift sanctions and systemic cleansing—these two will remain damning monuments to a profession that has lost its soul.