

HURIWA to FG:

N712 Billion Lagos Airport Terminal Renovation Smacks of Waste, and financial recklessness

The Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA) has expressed grave concern over the Federal Executive Council's (FEC) recent approval of a staggering ₦712 billion for the rehabilitation, upgrade, and modernization of Terminal One of the Murtala Muhammed International Airport (MMIA) in Lagos. The association described the project as fiscally reckless, opaque in process, and potentially tied to ulterior political motives ahead of the 2027 general elections. In a statement issued to the press by its National Coordinator, Comrade Emmanuel Onwubiko, HURIWA faulted the cost, the procedure of contract award, and the absence of public accountability in the entire transaction. The rights group said that in the midst of Nigeria's worsening economic situation—including skyrocketing inflation, rising debt obligations, and mass poverty—such a monumental expenditure on a single airport terminal is not only questionable but insensitive.

The approval, announced by the Minister of Aviation and Aerospace Development, Festus Keyamo, involves stripping Terminal One down to its core structure and rebuilding it with new mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems. The project was awarded to China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) and will be executed over 22 months, funded entirely through the Renewed Hope Infrastructure Development Fund.

HURIWA strongly questioned how a partial rehabilitation of an existing airport terminal could justify a price tag of over \$500 million, especially when benchmarked against international examples where entirely new and far larger airports have been constructed for relatively similar or even lesser amounts. The group cited the ongoing construction of the Techo International Airport in Cambodia, which is scheduled for completion in September 2025 at a cost of \$1.5 billion. "The Cambodian airport is being built entirely from scratch across 2,600 hectares, includes three runways, a cargo terminal, and will have capacity for over 50 million passengers annually. It represents a scale of development that far exceeds what is planned for Terminal One in Lagos, yet its cost is just double that of the Nigerian terminal refurbishment. In contrast, the MMIA terminal, already decades old and the subject of repeated refurbishments under the administrations of Presidents Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari, continues to attract billions in public funding without any comprehensive audit of past expenditures or outcomes.

"Under President Buhari, the federal government reportedly secured a loan of ₦106 billion to renovate the same terminal," HURIWA questioned why, in less than a decade, the same facility now requires another ₦712 billion for what the government claims is a "complete overhaul." The group stated that this pattern of repeated, high-value spending on the same infrastructure raises serious questions about the integrity of Nigeria's project evaluation and procurement systems. HURIWA warned that the award of such a contract, without a publicly advertised and competitive bidding process, undermines the Public Procurement Act and makes a mockery

of the federal government's pledge to promote transparency and fiscal discipline. The association called on the National Assembly to urgently summon the Minister of Aviation and other relevant stakeholders for a public hearing on the project, with a view to suspending it until a full breakdown of the proposed expenditure, scope of work, and selection process is made public.

According to HURIWA, there is growing suspicion that such massive infrastructure budgets are part of a larger agenda to raise funds for political campaigns ahead of the 2027 general elections. The group alleged that the hurried approvals and inflated project costs across various ministries may be indicative of a desperate bid by political actors to secure financial war chests. HURIWA further questioned whether the federal government is attempting to disguise political fundraising under the cover of capital projects. The association emphasized that in any transparent democracy, a project of this magnitude would have been subjected to multi-level review, feasibility analysis, and public consultation. Instead, Nigerians are being presented with vague press briefings, unverifiable technical jargon, and no access to the Bill of Quantities (BOQ) or any cost justification documents.

The group also expressed concern about the additional ₦49.9 billion perimeter fencing project approved for the same Lagos airport, noting that while airport security is important, the combination of multiple billion-naira contracts within such a short span of time points to a coordinated strategy to drain public resources without adequate oversight. The fencing is said to include intrusion detection systems, CCTV, floodlights, and a patrol road, but again, there has been no release of any detailed technical or financial documentation for public scrutiny.

While acknowledging the need for modern and secure airport infrastructure, HURIWA stressed that projects must be driven by accountability, fiscal prudence, and value-for-money principles. The group warned that unless urgent corrective steps are taken, the N712 billion MMIA terminal project could become another white elephant and national embarrassment, further burdening generations of Nigerians with debt.

HURIWA urged patriotic citizens, aviation professionals, civil society organizations, and the international community to demand immediate transparency and accountability from the federal government. It called on President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to halt the project, order an independent audit, and publish all contract details, including the tender process and full project scope.

The group concluded by stating that any administration truly committed to democratic governance, anti-corruption, and poverty reduction must not be seen to endorse extravagant, secretive projects with no public buy-in. "Nigerians deserve clarity, not shadows; accountability, not arrogance," the statement read.

HURIWA Warns: Tinubu's State Capture of Judiciary, Legislature Pushing Nigeria into Dictatorship

The Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA) has accused President Bola Ahmed Tinubu of presiding over an incipient dictatorship in which the Executive has captured the judiciary and legislature, rendering both arms of government impotent and subservient.

In a blistering statement issued in Abuja, the association said Nigeria is “on the brink of democratic annihilation” as judicial independence collapses under the watch of Chief Justice of Nigeria (CJN) Justice Kudirat Kekere-Ekun, and the National Assembly degenerates into a political annex of the Presidency.

“The Nigerian judiciary under the current CJN has been reduced to a timid, corrupt, and compromised shadow of itself, incapable of delivering justice in any matter that affects President Tinubu or his political cronies,” HURIWA declared.

“The National Judicial Council (NJC) is now a polluted sanctuary of inefficiency and poor governance standards, with its leadership firmly on the side of the President and the All Progressives Congress (APC).”

The group cited the political clout of Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Minister, Nyesom Wike, who, it alleged, has enjoyed an unbroken string of judicial victories under the current dispensation through “suspected insider compromises, unethical collusion, and abuse of judicial influence” in the Federal High Court, Court of Appeal, and Supreme Court.

HURIWA described as a “national embarrassment” the Supreme Court's refusal to even fix a hearing date for the suit challenging the “illegal and unconstitutional” suspension of the Rivers State governor. According to the group, the governor ultimately backed down because he knew the courts, already captured by the Executive and its allies, would never grant him justice.

The rights group also pointed to several post-2023 judicial outcomes that, in its view, have deepened public distrust in the legal system. It cited the Plateau State governorship dispute, where the Court of Appeal nullified the election of Governor Caleb Mutfwang of the PDP on grounds widely criticized as inconsistent with established legal precedents, only for the Supreme Court to reverse the decision.

It also referenced the Kano governorship case, where judgments swung back and forth in a manner that many Nigerians interpreted as the result of political bargaining rather than strict application of the law. Furthermore, it recalled the Presidential Election Petitions Tribunal proceedings, in which despite glaring irregularities cited by petitioners, both the tribunal and the Supreme Court upheld Tinubu's election — a decision that many political observers allege was predetermined through high-level compromises. “Since the 2023 elections, the Appeal Court and Supreme Court have been associated with a spate of alleged bribery-induced judgments in politically sensitive cases, especially those involving holders of executive offices,” HURIWA alleged. “These are judicial robberies dressed in legal robes.”

Quoting respected human rights advocate Prof. Chidi Odinkalu, the association noted that the Nigerian judiciary has become a

“bazaar of justice” where verdicts can be purchased, and that the CJN's failure to discipline erring judges is a direct violation of constitutional provisions and the Code of Conduct for Judicial Officers. HURIWA also reminded Nigerians of the controversy surrounding Justice Kekere-Ekun's tenure in the Supreme Court, noting reports that she was barred from entering the United States following her role in the infamous 2020 judgment that installed Senator Hope Uzodinma as Governor of Imo State from fourth place — a verdict globally condemned as a “crooked judicial coup.”

Turning to the legislature, the association accused the 10th National Assembly of “openly advertising its subservience to President Tinubu.” It cited Senate President Godswill Akpabio's public statement, “I was not elected to fight Tinubu,” as emblematic of a legislature that has abandoned its constitutional duty of oversight. From its inception, HURIWA alleged, Tinubu handpicked Akpabio as Senate President and Tajudeen Abbas as Speaker of the House of Representatives, using brazen political engineering, inducements, and intimidation to ensure their emergence. The result, it said, is a legislature that rubber-stamps presidential wishes without debate, scrutiny, or opposition.

The association also highlighted the disturbing trend of lawmakers and governors from opposition parties defecting to the APC under alleged threats of anti-graft probes or direct financial inducements from the Presidency. In HURIWA's view, the National Assembly has been transformed into an extension of the Executive arm, in violation of Section 4 of the Constitution, which vests legislative powers in an independent legislature.

According to the rights group, these trends are classic hallmarks of state capture — a situation in which a ruling elite controls key state institutions to serve private interests at the expense of the public. “If this descent into one-man rule is not halted, Nigeria will wake up to find its democracy dead and buried,” HURIWA warned. “The people, robbed of justice and representation, may resort to stoning corrupt judges and repudiating a political class that survives only on bribery and judicial manipulation.” The association called for urgent reforms, including the immediate sanitization of the NJC, disciplinary action against compromised judicial officers, and the restoration of genuine separation of powers. It also urged the international community to place visa bans on judges and politicians involved in subverting democracy.

HURIWA concluded with a stark warning: “Every day that this executive capture of the judiciary and legislature is allowed to stand is another day closer to full-blown tyranny in Nigeria.”