



AKOREDE HABEEB LAWAL

NATIONAL PUBLICITY SECRETARY, NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION



ALLEGATIONS OF NBA PRESIDENT AGAINST NATIONAL OFFICERS AT THE 2023 NBA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: A PERSONAL REBUTTAL BY AKOREDE HABEEB LAWAL

Distinguished Colleagues,

I begin by stating that I have enjoyed a good working and personal relationship with the President of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Mr. Yakubu Chonoko Maikyau, OON, SAN. Every day, I see him working hard and sincerely doing all he can for the betterment of the NBA, its members and the legal profession in Nigeria. However, for the sake of posterity and my personal integrity, it has become pertinent for me to address some concerns that emerged from the NBA President's remarks during the course of the recent Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the NBA which held on 31/8/2023.

In reacting to some allusions contained in the reports of the 2nd Vice President, 3rd Vice President and Treasurer, the NBA President had stated that the grouse of the said National Officers stemmed from the fact that he refused to misappropriate the Bar Practicing Fees paid by members by spending same on National Officers. While I do not believe that it was the intention of the NBA President to particularly demean my person or bring me to disrepute as a National Officer of the NBA, Mr. President's remarks in the heat of the moment was generalising, as he portrayed ALL National Officers in the same negative light, without exception.

First, the NBA President stated that National Officers stayed over time in hotels in Abuja thereby incurring unnecessary expenses on the account of the NBA. Secondly, he stated that National Officers at a meeting, attempted to share a Fifty Million Naira (N50,000,000.00) donation for a meeting of the National Executive Council which held in Kebbi. Thirdly, he said that National Officers wanted him to sponsor them to the International Bar Association (IBA) Conference at huge cost to the NBA. These are weighty allegations of corruption and gross abuse of office.



AKOREDE HABEEB LAWAL

NATIONAL PUBLICITY SECRETARY, NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION



I, Akorede Habeeb Lawal, refute these allegations in so far as they concern my person and my office as the NBA Publicity Secretary. With all sense of responsibility and humility, if anything, I have been prudent and transparent in all my dealings as far as my official roles are concerned. I will explain further.

(a.) Refunds of NBA Money by me:

I see this office as a privilege that cannot be indirectly or willingly abused. The President did mention that over Fifty Million Naira (N50,000,000.00) has been spent on National Officers since the inception of this administration. I, however, wish to place on record that I have neither applied for nor received any amount from the NBA except my flight fares and per diem (when I am on official duties – which were infrequent), and these are as determined by the Accounting Department of the NBA. Instead, on two different occasions since the inception of this administration, I have called attention to some monies I believe were wrongly sent to me and I accordingly returned same to the NBA purse.

The first was the sum of Two Million, Six Hundred and Thirty-Five Thousand Naira (N2,635,000.00) which was mistakenly transferred to me on 31/1/2023. Without any prompting, I called the Accounting Department's attention to this. Upon a check, the Department realised the error and I accordingly returned the fund to the NBA's Admin Account on 3/2/2023. The receipts are attached hereunder.



Receipt

₦2,635,000.00

CREDIT

In Words: Two Million Six Hundred Thirty-five Thousand Naira Only.

Paid on: 31 Jan. 2023 | 08:06 pm

Narration: NIP FRM NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION ADMIN



Receipt

₦2,635,000.00

DEBIT

In Words: Two Million Six Hundred Thirty-five Thousand Naira Only.

Paid on: 03 Feb. 2023 | 04:09 pm

Narration: AppRefund for Mistaken Transfer To Acc



AKOREDE HABEEB LAWAL

NATIONAL PUBLICITY SECRETARY, NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION



The second instance had to do with the sum of Two Hundred and Ninety Thousand Naira (N290,000.00) which I received on 14/7/2023 as supposed out-of-pocket expenses (to cover flight and accommodation) for the attendance of the NBA Section on Public Interest and Development Law (SPIDEL) conference. The NBA President had posited before the conference that National Officers ought not to be sponsored for such conferences with NBA funds. I therefore attended the conference without expectation of any sponsorship. At about the time the SPIDEL conference held in Ikeja, Lagos, I was handling some election petitions before the Election Tribunal sitting in Ikeja, Lagos. My clients had for that purpose availed me accommodation and logistics for appearance at the Tribunal. I therefore incurred no out-of-pocket expenses that the NBA had to pay for. I called the attention of the General Secretary to these facts and I requested that a mail be sent to me requesting a refund of the said sum. I accordingly refunded the sum of Two Hundred and Ninety Thousand Naira (N290,000.00) to the NBA's coffers. The mail thread is also attached.

Ursula Agbamuche <ursula.agbamuche@nigerianbar.org.ng>

Tue, 18 Jul 2023 at 13:05

To: Akorede Lawal <lawalakorede@gmail.com>

Cc: Yakubu Maikyau, SAN <yc.maikyau@nigerianbar.org.ng>, Adesina Adegbite <Adesina.Adegbite@nigerianbar.org.ng>,

Kazeem Nasir <kazeem.nasir@nigerianbar.org.ng>

Dear Sir,

Payment in the sum of N290,000 (Two Hundred and Ninety Thousand) in respect of SPIDEL Conference was paid to you on the 14th of July 2023. However, the General Secretary has requested that the payment be returned as it was approved in error.

Please see account details below for the refund.

NAME: NBA Admin Account

BANK: Access Bank

ACCOUNT NO: 0694192944

Thank you.

Ursula Agbamuche

Accounts Unit

Nigerian Bar Association National Secretariat

Plot 1101, Cadastral Zone A00

Central Business District

Abuja

www.nigerianbar.org.ng



AKOREDE HABEEB LAWAL

NATIONAL PUBLICITY SECRETARY, NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION



SPIDEL Conference Payment

1 message

Akorede Habeeb Lawal <lawalakorede@gmail.com>

Wed, 26 Jul 2023 at 09:35

To: Ursula Agbamuche <ursula.agbamuche@nigerianbar.org.ng>

Cc: Yakubu Maikyau, SAN <yc.maikyau@nigerianbar.org.ng>, Adesina Adegbite <Adesina.Adegbite@nigerianbar.org.ng>, Kazeem Nasir <kazeem.nasir@nigerianbar.org.ng>

Dear Ursula,

Your email is duly acknowledged.

I have accordingly refunded the sum of N290,000 as requested to the NBA Admin Account, today, 26/7/2023.

Kindly confirm receipt at your earliest convenience.

Thank you.

Akorede Habeeb Lawal
National Publicity Secretary

SPIDEL Conference Payment

1 message

Ursula Agbamuche <ursula.agbamuche@nigerianbar.org.ng>

Wed, 26 Jul 2023 at 11:25

To: Akorede Lawal <lawalakorede@gmail.com>

Cc: Yakubu Maikyau, SAN <yc.maikyau@nigerianbar.org.ng>, Adesina Adegbite <Adesina.Adegbite@nigerianbar.org.ng>, Kazeem Nasir <kazeem.nasir@nigerianbar.org.ng>

Dear Sir,

Your refund of N290,000 is confirmed.

Thank you.

*Ursula Agbamuche
Accounts Unit
Nigerian Bar Association National Secretariat
Plot 1101, Cadastral Zone A00
Central Business District
Abuja
www.nigerianbar.org.ng*



AKOREDE HABEEB LAWAL

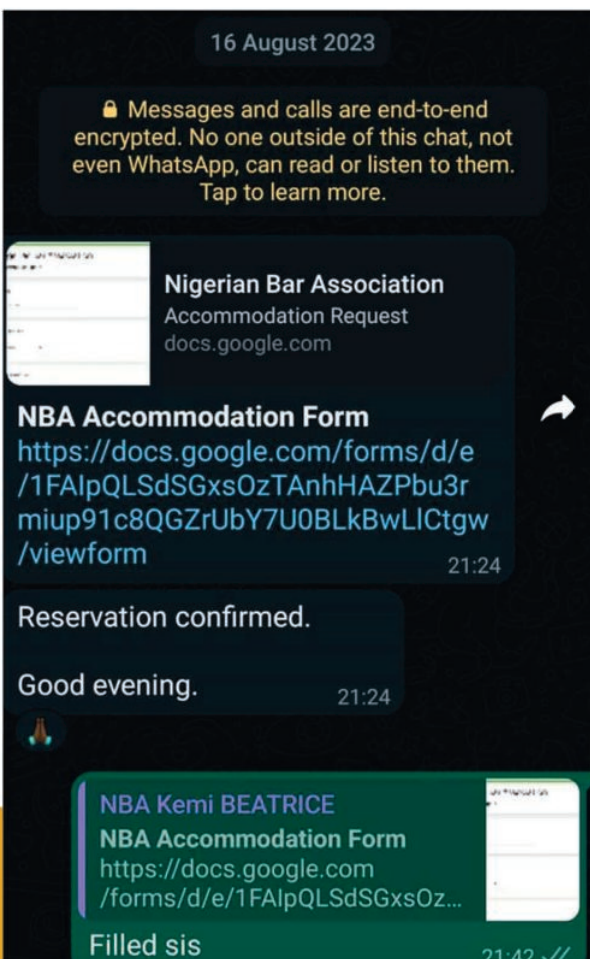
NATIONAL PUBLICITY SECRETARY, NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION



(b.) Allegation of Overstaying in Hotels:

This concern was raised by the NBA President in one of the earlier meetings of the National Executives, when he complained about some National Officers who had over stayed in hotels. To that extent, the NBA President directed the Secretariat to develop an accommodation request web form that must be completed and approved by him before a National Officer would be accommodated on the account of the NBA.

Since the introduction of this form, I, Akorede Habeeb Lawal, have been dutiful in completing same upon receiving the form via Whatsapp from the designated NBA Staff. I would seek and obtain the NBA President's permission through this form before I embark on any official duty. These records are readily available at the NBA Secretariat. The latest of such dutiful consideration by me was sometime in August, 2023. Below is the screenshot of my latest Whatsapp interaction with the designated NBA designated staff.





AKOREDE HABEEB LAWAL

NATIONAL PUBLICITY SECRETARY, NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION



(c.) Allegation of attempts to share N50,000,000.00 Donation:

The NBA President also stated at the AGM that National Officers at a meeting [while he was away from the meeting] agreed and informed him upon his return of their suggestion to share a certain Fifty Million Naira (N50,000,000.00) donation for the NEC Meeting held in Kebbi. The said National Officers' meeting held on 15/8/2023. Every other person was physically present at the meeting, except me, as I was constrained to join virtually. However, due to the fallibility of network, I was not available and present all through the meeting.

I therefore wish to categorically state that I was not present at the material time that the said suggestion was allegedly made. My only participation at the meeting in the President's absence was to clarify to the Assistant General Secretary (who took minutes) my suggestion at an earlier meeting that election of National Officers should probably be limited to only the offices of the President and General Secretary, since the President would often complain of the expenses the NBA incurs on logistics for National Officers and some National Officers would also complain of not being carried along in the administration.

I only got wind of facts relating to the sharing of the Fifty Million Naira (N50,000,000.00) donation when the President mentioned upon his return to the meeting (and I rejoined the meeting virtually) that he would not be sharing the Fifty Million Naira (N50,000,000.00) with and amongst National Officers. For emphasis, I never requested or suggested at any time that any amount belonging to the NBA be shared amongst its officers. I have no reason to do this. The minutes of this meeting is a verifiable evidence of this fact.

(d.) Allegation of requesting for NBA Sponsorship to the International Bar Association (IBA) Conference:

The NBA President further stated in his remarks at the AGM that National Officers sent him messages requesting for sponsorship to the IBA Conference. I wish to place it on record that, I, Akorede Habeeb Lawal, did not send the NBA President any message requesting or soliciting for sponsorship to the IBA Conference. Also, until Mr. President's remarks at the AGM, I was not aware that any memo was prepared and submitted for my participation at the IBA Conference.



AKOREDE HABEEB LAWAL

NATIONAL PUBLICITY SECRETARY, NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION



In any case, I would not have, in the ordinary circumstance of my personal schedule, been available to travel to France for the conference because I have family engagements outside Nigeria slated for about the same time the conference will be holding.

Conclusion

Distinguished colleagues, I have watched the video of the President's referenced comments at the AGM over and over again and it will simply suffice to state unequivocally that I am well groomed and I am not a thief. As a National Officer, I may not be stupendously rich, but I am contended and I do not live off the NBA funds. And in asking for your votes, I did not target our Association's funds. I have no reason to do this as the Almighty God has been kind and gracious to me and my modest law practice.

I will not recount the modest sacrifices that I have made in the course of my service to you, our esteemed members. In fact, I am privileged to make those sacrifices, because serving as your Publicity Secretary is one of the greatest honours of my life. After the pains of the last few days, I have also come to accept this incident as one of the sacrifices of leadership.

I, however, need to make this Disclaimer because of the personal value of true service that I hold dear and to encourage every young persons that may have second thoughts about making themselves available for service, because of incidents of this nature. I have therefore resolved that this incident will only spur me to rededicate myself to your service for the remainder of my term and I will continue to abide by the oath of office I subscribed to about a year ago when I was sworn in as your Publicity Secretary.

Thank you!

Akorede Habeeb Lawal

National Publicity Secretary, Nigerian Bar Association

7/9/2023