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## Babangida admits Abiola won June 12 election, calls annulment 'toughest decision' PAGE 4



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# Govs seek stronger US ties on governance, economy

By Dave Oludare Oso

The Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) has highlighted the imperative of fostering greater ties with the United States (US) to strengthen the country in the areas of economic development, health and governance.

The 36 state governors, under the auspices of the NGF spoke in a communique issued after its meeting in Abuja.

Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq of Kwara State, who is NGF Chairman speaking on behalf of his colleagues, reaffirmed their commitment to working with state legislatures to promote governance reforms and ensure effective policy implementation at the subnational level.

The communique stated, "The Forum engaged with the U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria, who shared his vision for a renewed and dynamic partnership between Nigeria and the United States. Highlighting a shift from a donor-recipient model to one of mutual collaboration, he underscored the importance of fostering economic opportunities for Nigerians.

"The Ambassador outlined four key priorities that will guide U.S. engagement with Nigeria: Enhancing trade and improving the business environment to attract investments and drive economic growth. Promoting transparency and accountability in governance to strengthen institutions."

According to the communique, the Ambassador added "Supporting subnational governments to bolster development at the state level and



establishing sustainable, Nigeria-led health programs to ensure long-term impact and resilience.

"Governors welcomed this renewed approach and emphasized the critical role of states in driving economic and social development. The Forum looks forward to deepening cooperation with the U.S. on these shared priorities."

The NGF also urged the Minister of Women Affairs, Imaan Ibrahim, to expand the Nigeria For Women Project, which focuses on enhancing women's economic empowerment through Women Affinity Groups.

It continued, "The Forum received a briefing from the Honourable Minister of Women Affairs on the Nigeria For Women Project (NFWP) Scale-Up, expanding nationwide from its initial six-state implementation. The project aims to support women's economic empowerment through Women Affinity Groups (WAGs), livelihood grants, and capacity-building initiatives,

contributing to the goal of lifting 100 million Nigerians out of poverty.

"The Forum engaged with the Conference of Speakers of State Legislatures of Nigeria (COSLON) to discuss key issues, including strengthening synergy between COSLON and the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF), and ensuring subnational perspectives are well-represented in the ongoing constitutional review process.

"COLSON also informed the Forum of their partnership with Development Finance Institution (DFI's) to digitize the State Houses of Assembly, aimed at enhancing legislative efficiency and transparency.

"Governors reaffirmed their commitment to collaborating with state legislatures to advance governance reforms and ensure effective policy implementation at the subnational level."

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9X3	166,223.50
8X6	225,368.50
8X3	106,934.50
7X4	180,173.50
6X4	100,434.50
6X3	82,750.00
6X2	52,499.50
5X6	123,749.50
5X5	110,000.00
5X4	76,833.00
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8X6	216,000.00
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7X4	164,002.00
6X4	94,010.50
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8X5	143,500.00
8X4	93,500.00
8X3	82,434.50
7X4	111,173.50
6X4	82,434.50
6X3	59,250.00
6X2	40,000.00
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9X5	168,191.50
9X4	N/A
8X6	N/A
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5X2	22,841.00
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# Babangida admits Abiola won June 12 election, calls annulment 'toughest decision'

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

Former military president, General Ibrahim Babangida (retd.), has for the first time publicly acknowledged that the late Chief Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola won the June 12, 1993 presidential election, but described its annulment as the "most difficult decision" of his life.

Babangida made the revelation in his newly launched autobiography, *A Journey in Service*, unveiled in Abuja on Thursday, February 12.

The book offers a deep dive into pivotal moments of Nigerian history, including controversial decisions during his time in power.

While reviewing the book at the launch, former Vice President Yemi Osinbajo quoted Babangida as saying that Abiola, who contested the election under the banner of the Social Democratic Party (SDP), fulfilled all constitutional criteria for the presidency, including securing the majority of votes and meeting the necessary geographical spread.

"There was no doubt in my mind; MKO Abiola won the election. He satisfied all the requirements," Babangida was quoted as saying, confirming Abiola's victory, which had been widely regarded as the most credible and free election in Nigeria's history.

Despite the overwhelming evidence of Abiola's victory, Babangida justified the annulment of the results, citing national security concerns at the time.

The decision to annul the election, which had been conducted with great expectations for a peaceful transition to democracy, remains one of the most controversial and defining moments of Babangida's regime.

Reflecting on the decision in his book, Babangida admitted, "Undoubtedly credible, free and fair elections were held in June, on June 12, 1993. However, the tragic irony of history remains that the administration that devised a near-perfect



electoral system and conducted those near-perfect elections could not complete the process."

He continued: "That accident of history is most regrettable. The nation is entitled to expect my impression of regret. As a leader of the military administration, I accept full responsibility for all decisions taken under my watch."

Babangida expressed that the annulment weighed heavily on him, but he found some solace in the posthumous recognition of Abiola.

In 2018, former President Muhammadu Buhari honoured Abiola with the Grand Commander of the Federal Republic (GCFR) title, Nigeria's highest national honour, which is typically reserved for sitting presidents.

"I took solace in the fact that, despite the annulment, MKO Abiola's legacy was honoured by President Buhari," Babangida added.

In addition to the June 12 election crisis, Babangida's autobiography addresses other significant national events, including the 1976 coup attempt that resulted in the assassination of then-Head of State, General Murtala Muhammed, and the 1986 letter bomb that killed

investigative journalist Dele Giwa.

The June 12, 1993 election, won by Abiola, was abruptly annulled by Babangida's government, sparking widespread protests and political unrest.

The annulment led to the incarceration of Abiola and a long period of political instability that eventually culminated in the return to civilian rule in 1999.

In his reflections, Babangida conceded that, if given the opportunity, he would have handled the entire situation differently.

He noted that, "Mistakes, oversights and missteps happened in quick succession, but I say in my book, in all matters, we acted in the supreme national interest so that Nigeria could survive."

The events surrounding the June 12 election remain deeply embedded in Nigeria's political history, with many Nigerians continuing to remember Abiola's sacrifice for democracy, while also seeking accountability for the annulment.

Babangida's confession marks a rare moment of admission by a key figure in one of Nigeria's most contentious political chapters.

# Nigeria leads Africa's Digital Trade revolution, eyes 10 million new jobs

By Friday Omosola

**N**igeria has been designated as Africa's Digital Trade Champion, a recognition that could drive the creation of over 10 million new jobs across the continent by the end of 2025.

This development affirms Nigeria's leadership role in shaping Africa's digital commerce landscape under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Vice President Kashim Shettima, represented by the Minister of Industry, Trade, and Investment, Jumoke Oduwole, reaffirmed Nigeria's commitment to spearheading Africa's digital trade agenda at the AfCFTA Digital Trade Workshop held in Abuja.

Themed "Unlocking State Exports Potential," the workshop gathered federal and state officials, trade commissioners, and private sector experts to explore opportunities in digital trade.

"Our innovations in mobile payments have transformed cross-border transactions, boosting financial inclusion and digital commerce across the continent," said Shettima.

He emphasized the need for rapid implementation of the AfCFTA Digital Trade Protocol, which aims to increase intra-African trade from 18% in 2022 to 50% by 2030.

Nigeria's appointment as the continent's Digital Trade Champion follows President Bola Tinubu's pledge in December 2024 to lead Africa's digital trade evolution.

The recognition was solidified at the 38th African Union Heads of State Summit, where Tinubu received commendations from former Nigerien President Mahamadou Issoufou, AfCFTA



Champion.

The Vice President also announced that Nigeria's Ambassador to the World Trade Organization (WTO), Adamu Abdulhamid, has been appointed chairperson of the Committee of Trade and Services Special Session, reinforcing the country's strategic role in global trade discussions.

With over 109 million internet users and a thriving mobile economy, Nigeria is well-positioned to lead Africa's digital trade transformation.

The continent's digital economy is projected to grow to \$180 billion this year, up from \$115 billion in 2020.

Shettima highlighted government initiatives such as the National Talent Export Programme, the Outsource to Nigeria Initiative, and the 3 Million Technology Talents Programme as key drivers of this growth.

To further strengthen Nigeria's digital trade infrastructure, the government has modernized its passport application system and invested in port infrastructure to streamline trade procedures, enhancing efficiency in customs processing and positioning Nigeria as a major trade hub in

West Africa.

Key stakeholders at the workshop, including Minister of Youth Development Ayodele Olawande, Kaduna State Governor Uba Sani, and Minister of Art, Culture, Tourism and Creative Economy Hannatu Musawa, underscored the potential of digital trade in boosting economic growth, supporting young entrepreneurs, and elevating Nigeria's creative industry on a global scale.

Additionally, Nigeria Customs Service Comptroller General Adewale Adeniyi detailed new digital trade facilitation measures, including the launch of the 'B'Odogwu' platform to improve transparency and efficiency in exports.

Director General of the National Identity Management Commission, Engr. Abisoye Coker-Odusote, stressed the importance of digital identity systems in transforming Nigeria's trade environment.

Representatives from the British High Commission, the Overseas Development Institute, and the AfCFTA Secretariat lauded Nigeria's leadership and emphasised the importance of robust policy implementation to unlock the full potential of Africa's digital trade framework.

# FG denies report on imminent Lagos-Abuja bullet train launch

ByGbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Federal Ministry of Transportation has refuted reports circulating on online platforms regarding the imminent launch of a high-speed bullet train between Lagos and Abuja, which was claimed to reduce travel time between the two cities from 12 hours to just two to three hours.

In a statement issued on Thursday, February 20, the Ministry described the claims as “fake and unfounded,” stressing that they were based on inaccurate information provided by Yinka Idris, the Director of Operations of Geofocus Consortium.

Idris had reportedly issued a statement suggesting that the feasibility studies for the project were complete, and that the necessary funding had been secured.

The Ministry clarified that while Geofocus Consortium had proposed the idea for the bullet train under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model in 2016, no concrete progress had been made on the project. The proposal, the Ministry explained, was initially submitted to the Infrastructure Concession Regulatory Commission (ICRC) in 2024 for due diligence.

However, the ICRC responded with a request for a support letter from the consortium’s financiers, a condition that has not yet been met. The Ministry also pointed out that the



Outline Business Case (OBC) for the project had not been approved, particularly due to the lack of proof of funds, which is a crucial requirement for the project to move forward.

The statement further clarified that it is only after meeting these requirements that a memo would be submitted to the Federal Executive Council (FEC) for approval.

“It should be noted that the claim that feasibility studies have been completed and proof of funds has been secured is purely speculative, as the company has yet to fulfil the necessary requirements,” the Ministry’s rejoinder read.

The Ministry also called on Geofocus Consortium to issue an apology to the Ministry and the Nigerian public for disseminating false information. It urged Nigerians to disregard the fake news and cautioned media outlets to verify

facts before publishing such claims.

“For quality reportage, the online platforms and other media outlets that published the false story are advised to seek clarification before going to print to avoid the spread of misinformation,” the Ministry added.

The statement concluded by reaffirming the Ministry’s commitment to advancing the transportation sector in line with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu’s Renewed Hope agenda, and appealed for the cooperation of all stakeholders in ensuring the sector’s success.

The Ministry, under the leadership of Hon. Minister of Transportation, Sen. Said Ahmed Alkali, continues to work towards fulfilling its mandate and delivering on critical infrastructure projects across the country.

# Tinubu announces 13 new appointments into NASC

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

President Bola Tinubu has announced some appointments into the National Assembly Service Commission (NASC).

Saviour Enyiekere was appointed as the chairman of the commission.

Making the announcement in a statement on Thursday, Bayo Onanuga, the president's special adviser on information and strategy said Enyiekere, an environmental specialist, previously served as the deputy chief of staff to Senate President Godswill Akpabio.

The statement said he will hold the position for a five-year term, which may be renewed.

Along with Enyiekere, Tinubu also appointed two members from each of Nigeria's six geopolitical zones to serve on the commission.



Like the chairman, they will also have a five-year term with the possibility of renewal.

The appointed members are:

North West

Suleiman Othman Hunkuyi  
Yusuf A. Yusuf Tabuka

North East  
Aminu Ibrahim Malle  
Alhaji Lawan Maina Mahmud

North Central  
Mark Hanmation Tersoo  
Salihu Umar

South West  
Taiwo Olukemi Oluga  
Afeez Ipesa-Balogun

South East  
Nnanna Uzor Kalu  
Festus Ifesinachi Odii

South South  
Patrick A. Giwa  
Mary Ekpenyong

# Senate urges NJC to resolve Benue CJ removal issue

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Senate has called on the National Judicial Council (NJC) to address the alleged removal of Benue Chief Judge, Justice Maurice Ikpambese, in accordance with constitutional provisions.

The upper chamber also tasked its Committee on Judiciary and Human Rights with investigating the matter and submitting a report in two weeks.

The motion, titled "Looming Constitutional Crisis in Benue State," was sponsored by Minority Leader Sen. Abba Moro (PDP-Benue) and supported by two other Benue senators.

Moro expressed concerns that the Benue State House of Assembly's purported removal of the chief judge, without



He condemned the Benue Assembly's actions as a violation of the Constitution.

Sen. Titus Zam (APC-Benue) seconded the motion, alleging that the House Speaker was following an agenda, noting that 14 members of the Assembly had opposed the removal.

Sen. Emmanuel Udende (APC-Benue) also voiced opposition, stating the Assembly had exceeded its powers.

Sen. Seriake Dickson (PDP-Bayelsa) reinforced that the NJC had already addressed the issue and that no political body should undermine constitutional processes.

proper legal procedure, posed a threat to democracy and the rule of law.

The senator pointed out that under the Nigerian Constitution, only the NJC has the authority to appoint and remove state chief judges.

# Drama in Senate as Natasha confronts Akpabio over seat reassignment

By Friday Omosola

A heated exchange broke out in the Senate on Thursday as Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan clashed with the leadership over a dispute concerning her seat allocation.

The controversy arose after a reshuffle, triggered by opposition lawmakers shifting to the majority wing, led to her seat being reassigned. However, she refused to move.

Chief Whip Senator Tahir Monguno defended the decision, citing Senate rules that grant the Senate President the authority to reassign seats as necessary.

He further cautioned that defying the directive could result in disciplinary actions, including being barred from participating in debates.

Senate President Godswill Akpabio reinforced Monguno's stance, denying Natasha the opportunity to speak when she attempted to address the chamber from her previous seat.

Frustrated, the Kogi senator raised her voice in protest, accusing the leadership of suppressing her.

"I don't care if I am silenced. I am not afraid of you. You have denied me my privilege," she declared defiantly.

The situation escalated when Akpabio instructed the sergeant-at-arms to remove her from the chamber.

However, intervention from colleagues helped ease tensions, though Natasha remained adamant in her refusal to change seats.

The New Daily Prime learned that this was not the first instance of a confrontation between Natasha and Akpabio in the Senate.

In July 2024, both lawmakers made



headlines after Akpabio dismissed Natasha's attempt to speak while he was delivering his address, as she had not been formally recognized.

During the exchange, he made a remark likening her to a nightclub, which sparked widespread reactions on social media, with many Nigerians calling for his apology.

Akpabio remarked, "Senator Natasha, you cannot speak without being asked or invited to speak in the Senate. This is not a nightclub."

As a result of his actions, a wave of calls bombarded him, his wife, and some alleged mistresses after GistLover shared their contact details on social media.

Despite the allegations, he firmly denied engaging in any extramarital affairs, asserting that he was married to only one woman—his wife.

Meanwhile, the Senate President, under mounting pressure, issued an apology to his colleague, Senator Natasha, for his remarks about a nightclub.

During the plenary session, he emphasized that he would never

intentionally disrespect a woman.

Addressing the issue in the Red Chamber, Akpabio reiterated that his comment was not meant as an insult to any woman.

He revealed that his phone had been inundated with offensive messages regarding the controversy.

According to him, it was his wife—whom he holds in high regard—who first brought the matter to his attention.

Akpabio stated, "I would never deliberately demean any woman, and I always pray for the elevation of women. Distinguished Senator Natasha, I extend my apology to you.

"The attention this has received on social media suggests the presence of adversaries. I felt it was necessary to offer a public apology.

"My words carried no ill intent. Instead of fixating on distractions, we should prioritize issues that will advance this nation. Social media users must engage responsibly. We will not regulate social media out of frustration."

# FG bans 60,000-litre fuel tankers from roads

By Friday Omosola

The Nigerian Midstream and Downstream Petroleum Regulatory Authority (NMDPRA) has announced a ban on 60,000-litre fuel tankers from operating on the roads.

The decision aims to mitigate the increasing number of truck-in-transit accidents and will take effect on March 1, 2025.

Speaking to journalists yesterday in Abuja, Ogbugo Ukoha, NMDPRA's Executive Director for Distribution Systems, Storage, and Retailing Infrastructure, stated that the ban resulted from extensive deliberations involving key stakeholders.

Agencies involved in the decision included the Department of State Services (DSS), Federal Fire Service, Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), and National Association of Road Transport Owners (NARTO).

Others are the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG), the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON), the Depot and Petroleum Products Marketers Association of Nigeria (DAPPMAN), and the Major Energy Marketers Association of Nigeria (MEMAN).

"For the first time, consensus was built among all stakeholders, and we will continue to work together cohesively to ensure the safe transportation of petroleum products across the country," Ukoha stated.

Addressing recent claims regarding the quality of fuel in circulation, Ukoha



dismissed them as misleading and unscientific.

He assured Nigerians that all imported and locally refined petroleum products meet strict regulatory standards before being released into the market.

"It is disrespectful to assume Nigerians are gullible. Those making unscientific claims are misleading the public and not contributing positively to the discourse," he said.

He reaffirmed the NMDPRA's commitment to complying with the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) 2021 and adhering to the specifications set by SON.

Ukoha explained that regulatory standards account for key parameters, including the Research Octane Number (RON), sulfur content, density, oxygenate levels, and colour differentiation to prevent the misidentification of products.

"Before any product is distributed in Nigeria, the regulator ensures that accredited laboratories test every batch and issue quality certification to confirm compliance with specifications," he

added.

Providing insights into the Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) supply, Ukoha noted that daily consumption, which averaged 66 million litres before subsidy removal in May 2023, has now dropped to approximately 50 million litres.

Local refineries contribute less than 50% of this demand, with the shortfall being met through imports.

"Following the President's subsidy withdrawal announcement on May 29, 2023, we observed a steep decline in consumption.

"Presently, none of the oil marketing companies that own refineries in Nigeria have imported any PMS this year. The shortfall is being bridged by other oil marketing companies to prevent scarcity," Ukoha explained.

He emphasised the NMDPRA's continued efforts to ensure sufficient petroleum supply across the country, underscoring that regulatory compliance remains a top priority for industry stability and consumer protection.

# LAGOS ASSEMBLY: Obasa denies stockpiling arms in office

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Just ousted Speaker of the Lagos State House of Assembly, Mudashiru Obasa, has described the allegation of a sudden discovery of a “cache of arms and ammunition” in his office as an attempt to tarnish his image.

In a personally signed statement in Lagos on Thursday, the six-term lawmaker described the allegation as baseless and an afterthought.

Some reports claimed the Assembly uncovered a significant cache of arms in the office of the Chief Security Officer (CSO) of the ousted Speaker, Mudashiru Obasa, on Tuesday.

According to several online media sources, the arms cache allegedly included about 47 pump-action rifles and live cartridges, stored within the Speaker’s office space.

Reacting to the allegation, Obasa, a three-term Speaker, said it was evident his detractors were attempting to malign his reputation by fabricating the claims against him.

He described the allegation as illogical and baseless, asserting that it was doomed from the outset and lacked credibility.

Obasa said: “My attention has been drawn to a viral, hatchet job disguised as journalism, published on February 18.

“The ill-conceived story, besides being a complete fabrication, exposes its author and sponsors as malicious individuals with a low intelligence quotient.



“The story aimed to malign my hard-earned reputation, built over decades of political leadership and legislative dedication.

“In their desperation to defame me, their laughable narrative — an outright abuse of social media — left many gaps, with obvious questions left unanswered.

“The report cited phantom sources in the Assembly and alleged the discovery followed an uproar over DSS presence in the complex.”

Obasa stated that the DSS, acting on a voluntary invitation, would ultimately expose those orchestrating his persistent blackmail through false accusations.

He added that despite their claims, his detractors continued searching for non-existent evidence to tarnish his image.

NEW DAILY PRIME reports that on Jan. 13, a speakership crisis erupted following Obasa’s removal over

alleged financial misconduct and gross impropriety.

Obasa was immediately replaced by his Deputy, Mojisola Meranda, while Fatai Mojeed was appointed as the new Deputy Speaker.

On Friday, Obasa approached the Lagos High Court to challenge his removal by fellow lawmakers.

However, chaos erupted at the Assembly on Monday as lawmakers and staff clashed with Department of State Services (DSS) operatives upon their arrival at the complex.

The Assembly complex was shut for several hours before legislative staff forced open the chamber’s doors, resuming activities amid heightened tension.

In a later statement, the Assembly condemned the presence of armed DSS operatives, arguing it undermined legislative sanctity and obstructed lawmakers from performing their duties.

# Reps push for action against use of fake vehicle plates in Nigeria

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The House of Representatives has urged the Nigeria Police Force and the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) to take immediate action against the growing use of fake vehicle number plates, citing concerns over increasing criminal activities in the country.

The motion, sponsored by Matthew Nwogu, the representative for Aboh Mbaise/Ngor Okpala Federal Constituency, Imo State, was adopted during Thursday's February 20, plenary session.

Nwogu emphasised that vehicle number plates are crucial for identifying vehicles and allowing security agencies to trace those involved in criminal activities.

He referenced a report from Vanguard dated February 7, 2025, which revealed that many fake plates used in crimes carry the logos of prominent institutions such as the Presidency, the Nigeria Youth Council, and the National Association of Nigerian Students.

These fraudulent plates have been linked to incidents like the notorious 'One Chance' robbery and kidnapping



schemes, which have caused significant harm to citizens.

"The use of fake number plates is directly contributing to the worsening security situation in the country. Some of these plates belong to respected institutions, yet they are not registered in the Nigerian Vehicle Registration database," Nwogu said.

Following a vote in favour of the motion, the House called on the FRSC, in collaboration with the Nigeria Police

Force, to ramp up efforts to arrest those using fake number plates and track down the producers.

The resolution also urged the agencies to ensure that only vehicles with valid, registered plates are allowed on Nigerian roads.

This move comes amid rising concerns over security and the increasing use of fake plates to facilitate crimes in various parts of the country.

# Libya repatriates 48 Nigerian females, two children

By Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye

The Department for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM) in Libya has successfully deported 48 Nigerian women and two children with support from Nigeria's consular services and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The repatriation was carried out on Wednesday via Mitiga International Airport, ensuring the safe return of the migrants to Nigeria.

This effort forms part of broader initiatives aimed at assisting Nigerian nationals who are facing hardships abroad, especially in conflict-affected areas like Libya.



and IOM support 48 #migrant females with 2 children of Nigerian nationality via Mitiga Int. Airport."

This latest repatriation is part of a

continued effort by the Nigerian government to assist citizens in Libya, following similar operations that have brought home over 150 Nigerians in recent weeks.

Migrant Rescue Watch confirmed the operation in a statement shared on X (formerly Twitter), stating: "DCIM repatriated from Tripoli with consular

# Police sack 19 officers, demote 24, sanction many over murder, misconduct, extortion

By **Dave Oludare Oso**

In a bid to sanitise and rid the Force of bad eggs, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) has wielded the big stick, dismissing, demoting, and sanctioning several officers over various acts of misconduct, including murders and extortions.

According to Sahara Reporters, this was disclosed in a 'police wireless message' dated January 23, 2025.

According to the police document, at the forefront of the disciplinary measures, 19 officers have been dismissed and are set to face prosecution for various offences.

Among them are ASP Ogunmuyiwa Saburi, ASP Idris Dan-Auta, CSP Pascal Ugocha, SP Yakubu Hankuri, DSP Mohammed S. Jahun, DSP Ayodele Emmanuel, and DSP Jimmy Ayeni.

The prosecution of these officers has been handed over to the Commissioner of Police (CP) Legal at the Force Headquarters for further legal proceedings.

Others slated for court trials include ASP Imoohi Dora, ASP Lawali Ahmed, ASP Salisu Ibrahim, and ASP Monday Ahmad Opana.

ASP Abdullahi Garba is facing prosecution for murder and



culpable homicide, reflecting the gravity of allegations levelled against some of the affected personnel.

Additionally, 24 officers have been demoted for professional misconduct. Notable among them are ACP Mohammed Aminu, reduced to CSP, and CSP Helen Ajuma Negedu, now downgraded to SP. SP Bello Aliyu and SP Ehimen Paul have been reduced to DSP, while DSP Haruna Abdulmumini and DSP Ferdinand Oyigbo have been demoted to ASP.

Several Assistant Superintendents of Police (ASPs), including Ndikamwu Henry, Enimade Oyediran, Ojulari Olaseni Oluwadara, and Adewumi Adeola, have been reduced to the rank of Inspector, signifying the force's zero-tolerance approach to discipline breaches.

The disciplinary action also saw 10 officers issued severe reprimands, including ACP Muhamad Auwal Yunusa, ACP Kalat Shamang, and CSP Nwanchor Emmanuel.

Meanwhile, nine others, including DCP Mohammed A. Jika and CSP Mathew Omosun, received official reprimands for various infractions.

Further actions include the demobilization of ASP Emmanuel Kura from the Police Mobile Force (PMF) and the directive for DSP Hauwa Kulu Sulaiman to refund nine days of salary. Additionally, DSP Ayuk Tachen has been surcharged for the loss of a firearm.

In contrast, DCP Coker Olalekan James was exonerated after investigations cleared him of any wrongdoing.

# Court grants Portable N2m bail, adjourns case to March 5

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Street rapper, Habeeb Okikiola Olalomi, popularly known as Portable, has been granted a N2 million bail by the Isabo Magistrate Court in Abeokuta, Ogun State.

The 'Zeh Nation' boss was arraigned by the police on a five-charge bordering on conspiracy, assault and restriction, armed with cutlasses and guns, conduct possible of causing harm to Ogun public officials on Thursday, February 20.

He was charged alongside his nine associates as they pleaded not guilty to the charges levelled against them.

According to the police (prosecutor), Portable and his allies – Nurudeen Warris, Adetola Alashe, Fatimo Muhammed, Oluwaseun Ayenuwa, Ifeoluwa Babatunde, Precious Ohiegebo, Samuel



Adeleke, Gospel Kanu, and Oluwapelumi Adeosun, breached the peace of the public with an intention to kill.

They had allegedly attacked town planning officers who were in Portable's bar (Odogwu Bar) for monitoring and enforcement assignment.

The singer, Portable being led to the court on Thursday

Having pleaded not guilty, the singer's lawyer, Oluwatoyin Ayodele pleaded to the court to grant his client bail, stating that Portable is now remorseful and has since learnt his lessons.

After listening to the plea, the Magistrate, O L Oke granted Portable N2 million bail with one surety in the like sum.

Oke also adjourned the case till March 5, 2025, for trial.

This comes a day after he turned himself in at the Lagos State Criminal Investigation Department in Yaba, following a declaration by the Ogun State Police Command that he was wanted.

# Gunmen shoot, kidnap Afenifere youth leader, demand N100m ransom

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

The Afenifere National Youths Council has announced the kidnap of its National President, Prince Eniola Joseph Ojajuni.

Making the announcement of the abduction in a statement on Thursday, the group noted that Ojajuni was abducted on Monday, February 17, 2025 in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory.

Abiodun Aderohunmu, the National Secretary of the Afenifere National Youths Council, disclosed that the kidnappers have demanded a ransom of N100 million.

The statement reads, "The Afenifere National Youths Council is deeply saddened to announce the kidnapping of



its National President, Prince Eniola Joseph Ojajuni, in Abuja, Nigeria.

"The unfortunate incident occurred yesterday, and the kidnappers have demanded a ransom of N100,000,000.

"During the kidnapping, Prince Ojajuni

sustained a bullet wound on his buttock. "We are deeply concerned about his safety and well-being, and we urge the kidnappers to release him unharmed.

"Prince Ojajuni is a prominent figure in Nigerian and a strong advocate for youth empowerment and development.

"We call on the Nigerian authorities to take immediate action to ensure Prince Ojajuni's safe release. We also appeal to the general public to provide any information that may lead to his rescue.

"The Afenifere National Youths Council will continue to work tirelessly to ensure Prince Ojajuni's safe return and to advocate for the safety and security of all Nigerians."

# NYSC withdraws corps members from Benue community over suspected herders' attack

By Helen Okechukwu

After a violent attack that claimed 20 lives in Mbaa community, Kwande Local Government Area of Benue State, the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) has withdrawn corps members from the area.

The attack was suspected to have been perpetrated by herders.

On Thursday in a statement released in Makurdi, the NYSC's Assistant Director of Information and Public Relations in Benue State, Yahuza Adamu, confirmed the evacuation.

Due to the security threat, Adamu said the decision to withdraw corps members was made, reaffirming the NYSC's commitment to their security and safety.

The statement read: "Since the beginning of incessant attacks on Mbaa Community, which shares a boundary with the Republic of Cameroon, NYSC withdrew all Corps Members from the area and has not posted



any there till date."

However, after a headcount conducted by the NYSC Kwande Local Government Inspector, no corps members were reported killed.

Read Also: NYSC: Why 200 corps members were queried-Oyo NYSC

Out of the 20 persons killed, 16 were said to be farmers, and their bodies were found at the River Katsina-Ala.

While reassuring the public of their proactive measures to prevent risk, Adamu noted: "Hence, all Corps Members serving in Jato Acka Turan, which is far away from the affected community, are not

exposed to any security threat."

"In fact, as a matter of policy, NYSC consistently takes proactive steps to mitigate risks and ensure that Corps Members receive the necessary protection at all times.

"We assure parents and guardians that NYSC Benue State remains vigilant and committed to the welfare of all its Corps Members and will continue to work with security agencies to ensure their safety at all times.

"Parents and guardians are encouraged to obtain accurate updates from NYSC official channels."

# Kwara plans digital skills training for 28,000 female students

By Helen Okechukwu

The Kwara State Government has reaffirmed its commitment to training 28,000 female students across 70 public secondary schools located in the state's three senatorial districts.

This was revealed in a post shared on Thursday via the state government's Facebook page.

In partnership with the Adolescent Girls Initiative for Learning and Empowerment (AGILE) project, the State Ministry of Education and Human Capital Development aims to achieve this initiative.

The five-day workshop, titled "Digital Literacy Skills Programme for Educators and Secondary School Girls," was declared open at Bovina View Hotels.

While explaining the initiative's objectives, Hajia Sa'adatu Modibbo Kawu, the State Commissioner for Education and Human Capital Development, noted that AGILE is a core initiative of Governor AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq.



Representing the commissioner, Mrs. Rebecca Bake Olanrewaju, the Permanent Secretary in the commissioner's office, stated that the program targets adolescent girls who lack digital knowledge.

Olanrewaju highlighted that the project focuses on constructing new structures, renovating existing blocks, providing Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

facilities, and supplying learning materials.

Read Also: Kwara govt reaffirms commitment to potable water supply

"As part of this initiative, Life Skills and Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) have been introduced as sub-components. These will provide training for female students on health, reproductive and emotional development to help them transition into adulthood, as well as financial support for extremely disadvantaged female learners in secondary schools," she said.

Modibbo Kawu emphasized the importance of digital skills for female students, noting that these skills will enhance their relevance in society and improve their employment prospects after completing secondary school.

Describing the initiative as a great opportunity to equip adolescent girls for the labor market, Mr. Adeshina Salami, Project Coordinator of the Kwara AGILE project, praised the state governor for introducing it.

# Father of African cinema, Souleymane Cissé dies at 84

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Malian filmmaker, Souleymane Cissé, a pioneer of African cinema with a career spanning 50 years, has died at age 84, Malian television announced Wednesday.

The cause of Cissé's death was not announced.

The Malian government said Cissé "had just held a press conference to present two trophies as a prelude to the 29th edition of Fespaco, the Pan-African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO), which will open this next weekend in the capital of Burkina Faso."

Cissé was the first Black African filmmaker to win a feature film prize at



the Cannes Film Festival in France. He won the jury prize in 1987 for "Yeelen," or "The Light," and in 2023, he won the Carrosse d'or for "Finye," or "The Wind."

Cissé also twice won the Étalon d'or de Yennenga, the Grand Prize of the

Ouagadougou Pan-African Film and Television Festival.

Born in Bamako, Mali, Cissé studied in Mali, Senegal and Moscow. He was President of the Union of Creators and Entrepreneurs of Cinema and Audiovisuals of West Africa.

Tributes poured in for Cissé, whose trailblazing work on the silver screen across more than half a century was marked by a commitment to African storytelling, deep humanism and political engagement.

"Papa died today in Bamako. We are all in shock. He dedicated all his life to his country, to cinema and to art," Mariam Cissé, his daughter said.

# CBN keeps interest rate at 27.5% amid economic uncertainty

By **Gbenga Oluranti Olaleye**

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has decided to maintain the country's benchmark interest rate at 27.50% following its 299th meeting in Abuja.

CBN Governor, Olayemi Cardoso, made the announcement on Thursday, highlighting that the committee unanimously agreed to keep key monetary parameters unchanged as it evaluated the economic outlook for 2025.

The CBN also kept the asymmetric corridor around the MPR at +500/-100 basis points, the Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) at 50% for Deposit Money Banks and 16% for Merchant Banks, and the Liquidity Ratio at 30%.

This decision marks a pause after six consecutive interest rate hikes in 2024, as the bank continues to manage inflationary pressures, exchange rate fluctuations, and concerns over economic growth.

The MPC noted stability in the foreign exchange market, improvements in external reserves, and a gradual decline in fuel prices as significant factors influencing its decision.

Despite these positive developments, inflation remains a key challenge, with the recently rebased Consumer Price Index (CPI) showing a headline



inflation rate of 24.48% in January 2025, down from 34.80% in December 2024.

READ ALSO: SERAP gives CBN 48 hours to reverse ATM fee hike

The committee expressed confidence that food security measures would gradually ease inflationary pressures, particularly those related to food prices.

Governor Cardoso emphasised the importance of continued collaboration between monetary and fiscal authorities to sustain macroeconomic gains, and credited recent foreign exchange measures for stabilising the exchange rate.

The CBN also highlighted a positive trend in oil production, which rose to 1.54 million barrels per day in January 2025, boosting external reserves to \$39.4bn as of February 14,

2025. Nigeria's GDP grew by 3.46% in Q3 2024, largely driven by the non-oil sector, especially services. The MPC also reassured that Nigeria's banking sector remains resilient, though it stressed the need for strengthening banking system surveillance, particularly amid ongoing recapitalisation efforts.

Geopolitical risks, including the Russia-Ukraine conflict and trade tariffs imposed by the US, were noted as potential threats to Nigeria's economic stability.

The committee reaffirmed its commitment to closely monitoring both domestic and global economic developments.

The next policy meeting is scheduled for May 19-20, 2025.

# My father-in-law wants Mohbad's properties, in competition with Liam - Omowunmi alleges

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

For the first time since the passing of Nigerian singer Ilerioluwa Aloba, known as Mohbad, his wife, Omowunmi Aloba, has broken her silence.

In an exclusive interview on "Chudeity", she detailed the harassment and intimidation she and her son, Liam, have faced since Mohbad's death.

New Daily Prime reported that Mohbad died on the 12th of September 2023.

Omowunmi revealed that the bullying her husband endured did not end with his passing. Instead, it has now shifted toward their young son.

She expressed deep concern over the relentless pressure and threats, describing the situation as a continuous cycle of intimidation.

## Shocking allegations

Omowunmi made several disturbing claims. She alleged that members of Mohbad's family and industry figures, including her father-in-law and singer Naira Marley, have continued to make her life difficult. She also accused her late husband's brother of preparing his final meal, raising questions about the circumstances surrounding Mohbad's death.

She further claimed that there has been undue competition over Liam's inheritance. According to her, some family members have pressured her to hand over properties linked to Mohbad, including land meant for their son. She also disclosed that she and Mohbad had been encouraged to get married due to external pressures.

Controversy surrounding Mohbad's burial



One of Omowunmi's most shocking revelations was that she was not informed about her husband's burial. She accused her father-in-law of making the decision without her knowledge, which later complicated the autopsy process. According to her, the rushed burial played a role in the inconclusive results of the examination.

She also alleged that there were attempts to kidnap Liam, further heightening her fears for their safety.

## The role of the nurse

The singer's wife mentioned a nurse who was involved in Mohbad's case. She claimed that the nurse had narrated everything that happened before her husband's death but was later dismissed from the situation. According to her, the dismissal raised suspicions about whether there was an effort to cover up key details.

## Threats and poisoning attempts

Beyond intimidation, the wife claimed that her life has been in danger. She said she has received multiple death threats

and even faced attempts to poison her. The ongoing threats, she said, have left her in a state of fear and uncertainty.

## DNA test controversy

Amid ongoing public speculation about the paternity of her son, Omowunmi addressed why a DNA test has not yet been conducted. While she did not rule it out, she explained that the current circumstances have made it difficult to proceed. She emphasized that her priority remains the safety of her son and herself.

## Public reaction

Omowunmi's statements have reignited conversations about Mohbad's tragic death and the struggles his family faces. Many fans and industry figures have voiced their support, demanding justice and protection for those affected.

As investigations continue, the public remains eager for answers. The controversies surrounding Mohbad's passing have left many questions unanswered and calls for justice are growing louder.

# Davido slams false headline linking him to kidnappers

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**A**frobeat star Davido slams a misleading headline falsely linking him to a Lagos kidnapping case, calling out fake news and warning of consequences.

A blog on X (formerly Twitter) posted a video showing three suspected kidnappers being arrested. The blog's caption read, "Davido and two others apprehended for kidnapping in Lagos." However, the name "Davido" was actually a reference to the gang leader, not the singer.

The wording of the headline caused widespread confusion. Many social media users, including Davido's fans, initially believed the post was referring to the award-winning musician.

The misleading nature of the report sparked outrage among his followers, who called out the blog for irresponsibility.

Davido reacts, warns against fake news  
The post did not sit well with Davido. In response, he strongly condemned the misleading headline and hinted at taking action against similar false reports in the future.

Reposting the news on his social media page, Davido wrote, "One day go be one day... Continue. My karma no dey always tey." His statement suggested that those spreading false or misleading news would eventually face consequences.

This is not the first time Davido has had to deal with fake news. Over the years, the artist has been a frequent target of false reports, clickbait headlines, and misinterpretations.

Fans defend Davido, call for responsible journalism

After Davido's reaction, many fans rallied behind him. They condemned the blog for spreading misleading information and urged social media platforms to regulate



such content. Some fans pointed out that irresponsible journalism damages reputations and misleads the public. Others warned that such false reports could have serious consequences for individuals targeted by them.

Media experts also weighed in on the issue, emphasizing the dangers of misinformation. They noted that misleading headlines can cause panic, harm reputations, and spread unnecessary fear. They urged bloggers and media outlets to prioritize accuracy over engagement-driven sensationalism.

The growing problem of clickbait headlines

Clickbait and misleading news reports have become a growing issue in the digital era. Many blogs and social media pages use sensational headlines to attract readers, often at the expense of truth and credibility.

For celebrities like Davido, the consequences can be severe. False reports can affect personal lives, professional reputations, and even business relationships. Many public figures have spoken out against this trend, calling for accountability and ethical journalism.

Davido's stance on media ethics

He has long been vocal about media ethics. In previous instances, he has addressed blogs and media outlets for spreading false or exaggerated stories about him. The singer, known for his transparency with fans, has repeatedly urged the press to verify information before publishing.

While Davido has not disclosed whether he will take legal action against the blog, his response suggests he will not tolerate such misinformation indefinitely. His statement, hinting at karma catching up with those responsible, reflects his frustration over repeated incidents of false reporting.

Conclusion

The recent incident highlights the dangers of irresponsible journalism and the impact of misleading headlines. His strong reaction underscores the need for accuracy in media reporting, especially in the age of viral content.

As misinformation continues to spread online, calls for ethical journalism and stricter regulations on digital news content are growing louder. Whether this particular blog faces any consequences remains uncertain, but one thing is clear—Davido and his supporters are not staying silent.

# I was a troll before becoming famous

## – Ayra Starr

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**N**igerian singer Oyinkansola Sarah Aderibigbe, better known as Ayra Starr, has made a surprising revelation about her past.

Before rising to fame, the 22-year-old Afrobeats sensation actively ran a social media troll page.

Ayra Starr shared this unexpected detail during an episode of the I Said What I Said podcast, hosted by Feyikemi Abudu and Jola Ayeye. While discussing her early social media activity, she admitted to having a dedicated fan page for American rapper Nicki Minaj.

“I had a troll page. I had a Nicki Minaj fan page before I became Ayra Starr,” she confessed.

### From fan page to global stage

Long before she became a household name, Ayra Starr was deeply involved in online fan culture. Like many young music lovers, she expressed her admiration for her favorite artist by creating and managing a fan page. However, she acknowledged that this involvement sometimes crossed into trolling.

Her journey from a social media enthusiast to an international music star is nothing short of remarkable. Signed to Mavin Records in 2021, Ayra Starr quickly rose to prominence with hits like *Away*, *Bloody Samaritan*, and *Rush*. Her unique blend of Afrobeats and R&B, combined with her bold personality, has earned her a massive following.

### Speaking out against online bullying

Despite her past as an internet troll, Ayra Starr has become one of the most vocal celebrities against online bullying. Since stepping into the spotlight, she has faced harsh criticism from social media users. Many have trolled her over her daring fashion choices and relaxed postures in



photos.

She has often clapped back at critics. In one instance, after being ridiculed for her “bad postures” in pictures, she responded with humor. “It’s the weight of carrying Afrobeats singlehandedly,” she joked, turning the criticism into a moment of empowerment.

Ayra Starr’s experiences reflect the double-edged nature of social media. While platforms like Twitter and Instagram helped her build a fan base, they also exposed her to negativity. Yet, she continues to navigate the online space with confidence and wit.

### The impact of trolling on celebrities

Ayra Starr’s revelation highlights a growing issue in the digital age. Many celebrities have spoken out about the mental toll of online trolling. The same platforms that provide opportunities for connection and promotion can also become breeding grounds for cyberbullying.

Her story serves as a reminder that social media culture is constantly evolving. What starts as fan engagement can

sometimes spiral into toxic behavior. Ayra Starr’s ability to reflect on her past while standing against cyberbullying shows her growth both as an artist and as a public figure.

### Staying true to herself

Despite the criticism, Ayra Starr remains unapologetic about her style and personality. She continues to embrace her individuality, encouraging young people to do the same. Her boldness, both in fashion and in music, has made her a role model for many.

As her career flourishes, she remains a dominant voice in Afrobeats, using her platform to advocate for authenticity and self-expression. Her story proves that transformation is possible. The same young woman who once ran a troll page is now a global superstar fighting against online negativity.

### Conclusion

Ayra Starr’s journey from an anonymous social media user to an internationally recognized artist is inspiring. Her admission about her past adds depth to her story, showing that growth and change are part of every journey.

# Portable makes u-turn, declares himself mentally fit in court

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**C**ontroversial singer Habeeb Okikiola, popularly known as Portable, has retracted his earlier claims of being mentally unstable.

Appearing before Magistrate O.L. Oke at the Magistrate Court in Isabo, Abeokuta, on Thursday, the Zazoo crooner insisted that he is in good health.

### Police declare Portable wanted

He had been declared wanted on Monday by the Ogun State Police Command. Authorities accused him of assaulting three officials from the Ogun State Planning and Development Permit Authority (OGPDPA). Following the announcement, police launched a manhunt, sparking a dramatic response from the singer.

### Portable's social media outburst

On Tuesday, he took to Instagram with a surprising claim. He said he was undergoing treatment at the Federal Neuropsychiatric Hospital in Aro, Abeokuta.

In a video, he stated, "I fear the government. I am a federal government liability. I am a madman. I have medications that I take regularly. You can confirm from Aro Hospital. I even have a patient card to prove it."

The singer further insisted that he was not a criminal. "I am from Abeokuta,



and they are taking care of me there. I am not a thief. I help people without checking their background," he added.

### Police dismiss his claims

His statements sparked reactions from the police. Omolola Odutola, the Ogun State Police spokesperson, dismissed his claims.

She stated, "Portable will have to surrender himself. He cannot be hiding in a psychiatric hospital. Everyone knows he is a wanted person. If he is in any facility, the police must be informed. He remains a wanted man."

### Singer surrenders, faces court

Despite his social media outburst, Portable turned himself in less than 48 hours after the police declared him

wanted. He was subsequently arraigned in court on Thursday.

During the court proceedings, Magistrate Oke questioned the singer's mental state. "Are you alright? Are you sure you are mentally sound? If not, we have several psychiatric homes where we can send you," the magistrate asked.

Portable, standing before the court, responded confidently. "I am mentally alright," he said.

### Granted bail, case adjourned

The prosecution filed five charges against the singer, but he pleaded not guilty. The court granted him bail set at ₦2 million with a surety of the same amount.

The case has been adjourned until March 5 for further hearing.

# Bobrisky singing 'Favour' left me stunned

## - Lawrence Oyor

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**N**igerian gospel minister Lawrence Oyor has expressed shock after seeing popular crossdresser Bobrisky singing his hit song Favour.

Oyor, known for his inspirational gospel music, admitted that he had to replay the video several times to process what he had just witnessed.

In a video shared online, Oyor described his reaction as disbelief. He never expected someone like Bobrisky to be familiar with his music, let alone sing along to it.

The gospel singer even joked that he almost denied ownership of the song because of the unexpected nature of the moment.

**"A very risky Bob"**

Oyor recounted his feelings while watching the clip. "I saw one of our guys—the most unexpected guy on the internet—singing Favour," he said. "I almost denied the song. I know some of you didn't see it, but somehow it got to me. Somebody sent it to me."

The gospel minister then went on to describe Bobrisky in a way that played on the crossdresser's name. "I saw Bob, a very risky Bob, singing Favour," he added. "I had to watch it like three times. The shock! You too? I have never doubted myself like that before. How?"

**A moment of reflection**

Oyor's words suggested that the moment left him questioning how his music had reached such an unexpected audience.

As a gospel minister, he likely never imagined that his message of faith and inspiration would resonate with someone like Bobrisky, a figure known for controversial takes on gender identity



and social issues.

Despite his initial shock, Oyor did not express any outright disapproval. Instead, his reaction appeared to be a mix of surprise and humour.

Many of his followers found the exchange amusing, with some suggesting that music has the power to reach all kinds of people, regardless of background or beliefs.

**Music knows no boundaries**

Oyor's reaction highlights a truth about music—it transcends boundaries. Whether gospel, pop, or traditional, a song can connect with people in unexpected ways. Bobrisky, who is widely known for their social media presence and bold personality, has often been at the center of public discussions. Seeing them engage with a gospel song like Favour might have been surprising to Oyor, but it also speaks to the universality of music.

**Social media reactions**

Fans quickly reacted to Oyor's comments, with many sharing their own thoughts on the viral moment. Some

found the situation humorous, while others saw it as a sign that gospel music can touch lives in unexpected ways. A few even encouraged Oyor to see it as a positive thing, as his message of faith was reaching diverse audiences.

One user commented, "God works in mysterious ways. Even Bobrisky is singing Favour—this is proof that gospel music is powerful!" Another added, "Oyor should be happy. His song is making waves beyond church circles."

**The bigger picture**

Beyond the humor and shock, this moment serves as a reminder that no one is beyond the reach of music or faith. Oyor's song, meant to uplift and inspire, found its way to an unexpected listener. Whether intended or not, the clip of Bobrisky singing Favour has sparked conversations about the influence of gospel music and the unpredictable ways it spreads.

For now, Oyor may still be processing the moment, but one thing is clear—his song has gone further than he ever imagined.

# Childhood friend's threat inspired a track on my album – Magixx

By Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi

**N**igerian singer Magixx has opened up about the personal stories behind two songs from his upcoming album, *I Dream In Colour*.

In a series of posts on X (formerly Twitter), he revealed that the last track on the album was inspired by a disturbing encounter with a childhood friend.

“The last track on my album was because of my childhood friend that threatened to get me killed,” he wrote.

While he did not share further details, his words suggest a painful memory that has now been turned into music. The revelation left many fans shocked, with some expressing concern for his safety.

Track 3 dedicated to three girlfriends  
In another surprising confession, he shared that the third song on the album is a tribute to three special women in his life.

“My amazing three girlfriends are the reason I made track 3,” he wrote. “I want to @ you all, but you know yourselves. I love you.”

His post quickly sparked discussions online, with fans debating whether he was being serious or simply using the statement as a creative way to promote the album.



Fans react to Magixx's revelations

After Magixx's posts went viral, social media was flooded with reactions. Some fans sympathized with him over the story behind the final track, while others were fascinated by his bold confession about having three girlfriends.

“Three girlfriends at once? He is living the dream!” one fan commented.

Another wrote, “The story behind the last track sounds scary. Hope he's safe now.”

Many are now eager to hear the songs and discover how these personal experiences have been translated into music.

Magixx's rising influence in afrobeats  
Since joining Mavin Records, he has built a strong reputation in the Nigerian music scene. His unique blend of Afrobeats and R&B has earned him a growing fanbase.

With *I Dream In Colour*, he appears to be taking a more personal approach, drawing inspiration from real-life experiences. His latest revelations suggest that the album will be filled with deep emotions and meaningful storytelling.

As the release date approaches, excitement continues to build. Whether it's a song inspired by past struggles or a tribute to loved ones, *I Dream In Colour* is shaping up to be his most intimate project yet.

# Beauty pageant winner dies in U.S. car accident

By **Ifedamola Joseph Fayomi**

An 18-year-old beauty queen, Kadance Fredericksen, tragically lost her life in a fatal car crash in Florida after her vehicle collided with a tractor-trailer.

Her vehicle collided head-on with a tractor-trailer, according to the Florida Highway Patrol.

Fredericksen, a former Miss Okaloosa County Teen USA, had inspired many with her resilience. She overcame childhood hardships, including homelessness and abuse, to achieve success in the pageant world.

## Crash under investigation

Authorities are still investigating the cause of the crash. Reports indicate that Fredericksen was driving when the accident occurred. The tractor-trailer driver sustained minor injuries but was not arrested.

The collision has shocked many in her community. Friends, family, and supporters have expressed grief over the young woman's untimely passing.

## A story of overcoming adversity

Fredericksen's journey was one of perseverance. She faced extreme challenges in her early years, including neglect and mistreatment from her biological mother and stepfather. She later revealed that she had suffered abuse and grooming at the hands of her stepfather.

Her life took a positive turn when her father and stepmother gained custody of her. They eventually adopted her, providing the stability she needed to thrive.

Despite her past struggles, Fredericksen remained determined to build a better future. She used her experiences to fuel her



ambitions, winning beauty pageants and advocating for children facing similar hardships.

## A bright future cut short

Just days before her tragic death, Fredericksen had shared exciting news with her followers. On February 7, she announced that she had been awarded a \$40,000 college scholarship from the Ellison McCraney Ingram Foundation.

"I am incredibly grateful to be selected as a recipient of this year's Ellison McCraney Ingram Foundation \$40,000 Scholarship," she wrote in her final Instagram post.

Her post reflected optimism and hope for the future—dreams that were tragically cut short.

## Leaving a legacy of kindness

Beyond her personal achievements, Fredericksen dedicated herself to helping others. She founded Kada's Promise, a

charity that collected thousands of teddy bears and blankets for children suffering from trauma and abuse.

Her organization distributed over 12,000 items to children in need, providing comfort to those facing difficult situations. Her commitment to kindness and advocacy left a lasting impact on her community.

## A community in mourning

Fredericksen's death has left a deep void. Those who knew her describe her as compassionate, determined, and full of life.

As authorities continue their investigation into the crash, tributes continue to pour in. Many remember her not only as a beauty queen but as a fighter—someone who turned pain into purpose.

Her tragic passing serves as a heartbreaking reminder of how fleeting life can be. While she may be gone, her story of resilience and generosity will not be forgotten.

# Zelenskiy calls for US pragmatism after Trump calls him a 'dictator'

By Olamilekan Botti

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy emphasized the importance of unity both at home and across Europe, while expressing hope for pragmatism from the United States. This conciliatory message follows a surprising public rebuke from U.S. President Donald Trump, who described Zelenskiy as a “dictator without elections” and urged him to act swiftly to secure peace or risk losing his country.

Such rhetoric marks a stark departure from the traditionally supportive stance of the U.S. towards Ukraine, especially since Russia’s full-scale invasion three years ago. Trump’s comments have raised eyebrows among European leaders, who have long viewed the United States as a crucial ally in the fight against Russian aggression.

The U.S. president is advocating for a rapid resolution to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, a position that has unsettled Washington’s European allies. Concerns have been voiced regarding Trump’s exclusion of both European leaders and Ukraine from preliminary discussions with Russia, coupled with his tendency to place blame on Ukraine for the February 2022 invasion.

In response, European leaders are ramping up defense spending and exploring the possibility of a U.S.-backed European peacekeeping force for Ukraine—a plan that has drawn criticism from the Kremlin but received Zelenskiy’s endorsement. “We are standing strong on our own two feet. I am counting on Ukrainian unity, our courage, the unity of Europe, and the pragmatism of America,” Zelenskiy stated in a video address on Wednesday evening. He highlighted that “America needs success just as much as we do.”

Zelenskiy confirmed upcoming discussions with U.S. envoy for Russia and Ukraine, Keith Kellogg, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a constructive dialogue with



Washington. Meanwhile, Trump is reportedly interested in re-establishing ties with Russia while also seeking to harness Ukraine’s mineral resources, which are vital for the global energy transition. However, Ukraine rejected an initial U.S. proposal that lacked security guarantees, prompting Zelenskiy to accuse Trump of echoing Russian disinformation regarding the conflict.

White House National Security Adviser Mike Waltz advised Ukraine to temper its criticism of the U.S. and consider a minerals deal. “They need to tone it down and take a hard look and sign that deal,” he remarked during an interview with Fox News. Reports suggest that the Trump administration may pursue a simplified minerals agreement before negotiating more detailed terms.

## A Wake-Up Call for Europe

European leaders are grappling with the implications of this apparent shift in U.S. policy towards Russia and Ukraine. Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis stated that recent developments necessitate a reevaluation of their approach. “This different view of things from the United States now obliges us not only to face the truth but to move at a very high speed,” he remarked after discussions with other European and Canadian leaders.

As Russian forces continue to devastate Ukrainian cities and advance along the extensive eastern and southern front lines, the prospect of a ceasefire remains contentious. Ukrainian officials argue that a ceasefire would merely provide Russia with an opportunity to regroup for further aggression. However, the head of Ukraine’s military intelligence agency hinted at the possibility of a ceasefire later this year while expressing skepticism about its longevity.

Upon his arrival in Kyiv, Kellogg reiterated his intent to listen to Ukrainian concerns. Zelenskiy echoed a message of collaboration, stating, “Together with America and Europe, peace can be more secure, and this is our goal. Success brings us together. Our unity is the strongest safeguard of our future—a future without (Russian President Vladimir) Putin, but with peace.”

## Domestic Reactions

Central to Trump’s criticism of Zelenskiy is the assertion that Ukraine has not held elections due to the martial law imposed after Russia’s invasion on February 24, 2022. This law grants authorities emergency powers but prohibits elections. Zelenskiy’s mandate, which began in 2019, would have typically concluded last May.

# Mexico's president warns U.S. against invading to fight cartels

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

Mexico will never tolerate an invasion of its national sovereignty by the United States, President Claudia Sheinbaum warned Thursday after Washington designated Mexican drug cartels as terrorist organisations.

“This cannot be an opportunity for the U.S. to invade our sovereignty,” she said. “With Mexico it is collaboration and coordination, never subordination or interventionism, and even less invasion.”

On Wednesday, the Trump administration formally labeled eight cartels as terrorist groups. They include Mexico's two main drug trafficking organizations, the Jalisco New Generation and Sinaloa cartels.

Trump signed an executive order on his first day back in the White House saying that the cartels “constitute a national-security threat beyond that posed by traditional organized crime.”

The move has raised speculation about possible military action.

Tech billionaire Elon Musk, who has been given a prominent role in the Trump administration, said on social media the designation “means they're eligible for drone strikes.”

Experts, however, said that bombing Mexican cartels or sending troops over the border still appeared unlikely, although Mr. Trump's unpredictability makes it impossible to completely rule out.

Mexico's President, Claudia Sheinbaum receives military honors during the 112th anniversary of the Mexican army in Cerralvo, Nuevo Leon state, Mexico, Feb.



19, 2025. Julio Aguilar/AFP via Getty Images

The idea “used to be something that was found in a niche, very much on the fringes, and now it is at the center of the discussion,” said Cecilia Farfan-Mendez, an analyst at the University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation.

In 2022, former Secretary of Defence Mark Esper told “60 Minutes” that during his first term President Trump suggested firing missiles into Mexico to combat drug cartels there. Esper also said when he pushed back on the idea, Trump said, “No one would know it was us.”

### Mexico targets U.S. gun manufacturers

Sheinbaum also said Thursday that Mexico would follow through on her promise to expand its legal action against U.S. gun manufacturers following Washington's decision to designate cartels as terrorist groups.

The Mexican government accuses U.S.

arms makers of negligence in the sale of weapons that end up in the hands of drug traffickers, and Sheinbaum said the lawsuit could lead to a new charge of alleged complicity with terrorist groups.

An estimated 200,000 to half a million American firearms are smuggled into Mexico every year, “60 Minutes” reported in December.

A 2023 CBS Reports investigation found that dozens of cartel gunrunning networks, operating like terrorist cells, pay Americans to buy weapons from gun stores and online dealers all across the country, as far north as Wisconsin and even Alaska, according to U.S. intelligence sources. The firearms are then shipped across the southwest border through a chain of brokers and couriers.

Mexico has already filed a lawsuit in the United States against U.S. arms manufacturers and vendors, claiming \$10 billion in damages for their alleged role in criminal violence in the country.

# Appeal Court declines to reinstate Trump's birthright citizenship order

By Dave Oludare Oso



A three-judge panel of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals on Wednesday declined the Justice Department's request to immediately reinstate President Donald Trump's executive order limiting birthright citizenship, setting up a potential emergency application to the Supreme Court.

Legal experts have said Trump's order conflicted with the Fourteenth Amendment, which extends American citizenship to anyone born on U.S. soil, by denying citizenship to future children born in the United States if their mothers were unlawfully present in the

country and their fathers were not citizens or permanent residents.

The Justice Department had asked the 9th Circuit to grant an emergency stay of a lower court's decision blocking Trump's order from going into effect.

In denying the request, the panel found the Justice Department had not made a "strong showing that they are likely to succeed on the merits of this appeal."

One member of the panel, Trump-appointed Judge Danielle Forrest, expanded on her reasoning in a concurring opinion, taking issue

with the Justice Department's characterization of an emergency.

"It is routine for both executive and legislative policies to be challenged in court, particularly where a new policy is a significant shift from prior understanding and practice," she wrote.

"And just because a district court grants preliminary relief halting a policy advanced by one of the political branches does not in and of itself an emergency make. A controversy, yes. Even an important controversy, yes. An emergency, not necessarily."

# 65 minors among 135 Asians on U.S. deportation flight to Costa Rica

By Elizabeth Jenrola Oso

A flight carrying primarily Asian undocumented migrants, 65 of whom are minors, is expected to land in San Jose, Costa Rica on Thursday afternoon.

A deportation flight leaving the United States on Thursday carrying 135 mostly Asian undocumented migrants is expected to land in Costa Rica in the afternoon. Almost half of the migrants will be children.

The migrants, heading from San Diego to San Jose, hail from China, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan, among other countries. Sixty-five minors and at least two pregnant women are among the deportees, Omer Badilla, Costa Rica's deputy minister of the interior and police, told Noticias Telemundo on Wednesday.

Some of the migrants' home countries have not easily accepted to repatriate them. In the meantime, Costa Rica serves as a "bridge" for them, the U.S. government has said.

The deportation flight is the latest headed to Central America, as some 300 people — also from mostly Asian countries — are being held in a Panama hotel.

Badilla said Costa Rica agreed to accept the migrants "because of our history and our customs as human rights protectors," and that the agreement with the Trump administration isn't based on any special conditions.

"We responded to the United States' government's request and we raised our hand to help them," Badilla said.

Costa Rican President Rodrigo Chaves said at a news conference Wednesday that the country is helping its "economically powerful brother from the north."

"If they impose a tax in our free zones, it'll screw us," Chaves said. "I don't think they'll do it, thank God ... love is repaid with love ... 200 will come, we treat them well and they will leave."



The White House did not immediately respond to NBC News' request for comment.

The flight to Costa Rica is also carrying migrants from Tajikistan, Vietnam, Georgia and Azerbaijan, Badilla said. None of the migrants have criminal records but are undocumented, he said.

Upon landing, the migrants will board a bus for a six-hour trip to the town of Corredores, on the border with Panama, where they will be housed in a Temporary Migrant Care Center.

The Thursday flight marks the first in which Costa Rica will serve as a stopover for deportees. The United States is footing the bill for the flights, including the flights that will eventually transport these migrants to their home countries. And the International Organization for Migration, a United Nations agency, will provide humanitarian support.

"IOM's role in assisting people deported from the United States focuses on providing humanitarian support and facilitating return when it is safe to do so," a spokesperson for the IOM said in a statement. "While we are not directly involved in the detention or restriction of movement of people, we are committed

to ensuring that all migrants are treated with dignity and in accordance with international standards."

All the deportees will be subject to a "detailed study" of their situation, Badilla said, to ensure that their lives are not in danger in their home countries. And some, he noted, will be able to request refugee status in Costa Rica. The country typically allows up to 30 days to repatriate the deported migrants, but Badilla said the process could be extended to ensure that their human rights will not be violated upon returning home.

The hundreds of people recently deported to Panama are being held in a hotel there and are forbidden to leave the premises as they wait for international authorities to arrange their return home, The Associated Press reported.

"What we agreed with the U.S. government is that they will stay here and are under our temporary custody for their protection, but the International Organization for Migration and UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) are responsible for repatriation to their countries," Frank Abrego, Panama's minister of public security said at a press conference on Tuesday.

# No evidence USAID funding terrorist groups anywhere – US Ambassador

By Dave Oludare Oso

In a bid to quell the raging controversy generated by a US congressman regarding funding of terrorism, the United States Ambassador to Nigeria, Richard Mills, has said there is no evidence that the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is funding or funded Boko Haram or any terrorist group in Nigeria.



Speaking after a meeting with the Nigeria Governors Forum in Abuja late Wednesday, the envoy assured that if any evidence is found that USAID funds Boko Haram or any terrorist group, the US government will work with the Nigerian government to investigate the matter.

Mills said, “Let me be clear— there is no friend of Nigeria stronger in condemning Boko Haram’s violence and disregard for human life than the United States.

“We have designated Boko Haram as a foreign terrorist organisation since 2013, blocking the group from transferring assets to the US and allowing us to arrest and seize its members.

“We cooperate in investigations with the Nigerian government. I can assure you that we have strict

policies and procedures to ensure that USAID funding or any other US assistance, whether from USAID, the Department of Defence, or the State Department, is not diverted to terrorist groups like Boko Haram.

“There is absolutely no evidence of such diversion, and if we ever had evidence that any programme funding was being misused by Boko Haram, we would immediately investigate it with our Nigerian partners.”

Recall that on February 13, Congressman Scott Perry accused USAID of funding terrorist groups, including Boko Haram.

The lawmaker, Perry, a Republican from Pennsylvania, made this statement during the first hearing of the Subcommittee on Delivering on

Government Efficiency.

“Who gets some of that money? Does that name ring a bell to anybody in the room? Because your money, your money, \$697 million annually, plus the shipments of cash funds in Madrasas, ISIS, Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, ISIS Khorasan, and terrorist training camps. That’s what it’s funding,” he said.

The claim had sparked a reaction on the role of USAID in Nigeria and globally.

Consequently, on Wednesday, the Nigerian Senate called on the National Security Adviser, Nuhu Ribadu, along with the heads of the National Intelligence Agency and the Defence Intelligence Agency, to address allegations of terrorist funding involving USAID.

# Russia launches 161 drones targeting Ukrainian infrastructure

By Olamilekan Botti

Russia has unleashed a barrage of 161 drones and approximately a dozen missiles overnight, targeting critical gas infrastructure in Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region. This onslaught also struck power supplies in the southern Odesa region for the second consecutive night, according to Ukrainian officials on Thursday.

This assault is part of a broader, intensified campaign against Ukraine's energy system, which has ramped up over the past month. As discussions regarding the potential end of the war in Ukraine unfold with the new U.S. administration under President Donald Trump—who has controversially blamed Ukraine for Russia's invasion—the Kremlin appears to be ramping up its military efforts.

“The purpose of these criminal attacks is to halt the production of gas necessary for meeting the domestic needs of citizens and central heating,” emphasized Ukraine's Energy Minister, German Galushchenko. This statement underscores the strategic targeting of Ukraine's energy resources, which are vital during the cold months when heating demand surges.

The Ukrainian military reported that it successfully intercepted 80 of the drones launched in this recent attack, with 78 drones reportedly “lost,” likely due to effective electronic countermeasures. Additionally, the military noted that Russia fired around 14 missiles at what they described as “critical infrastructure” in Kharkiv, further illustrating the intensity of the assault.

The Kharkiv and neighboring Poltava regions are pivotal to Ukraine's gas production capabilities, supplying



nearly half of the nation's gas needs. This strategic importance makes them prime targets for Russian aggression, which has shifted focus in recent months from solely attacking the electricity sector to aggressively targeting gas storage facilities and production fields.

In a statement, Ukrainian state oil and gas company Naftogaz confirmed that its gas production facilities across several regions sustained damage during the latest wave of attacks. Despite the challenging circumstances, Naftogaz CEO Roman Chumak reassured the public, stating, “The situation is under control, although very difficult.” He further indicated that the company is “preparing for all possible scenarios and continues to import gas” to ensure energy security.

The increase in Russian missile attacks targeting gas facilities has led to a dramatic surge in Ukraine's gas import volumes, which have risen nearly tenfold since the beginning of February. This escalation not only highlights the ongoing conflict's impact on Ukraine's energy infrastructure but also raises concerns about the nation's ability to

maintain sufficient energy supplies for its citizens.

As the situation develops, the urgency for both military and civilian preparedness becomes increasingly apparent. The Ukrainian government is actively working to safeguard its energy resources while navigating the complexities of international diplomacy amid ongoing hostilities.

The resilience of Ukraine's energy sector will be put to the test as it faces these relentless assaults, with officials emphasizing the need for continued support from international allies. As discussions between the U.S. and Russia evolve, the implications for Ukraine's energy security and overall stability remain critical.

In conclusion, the recent Russian attacks exemplify the ongoing tensions and the strategic significance of energy infrastructure in the conflict. The repercussions of these strikes will likely resonate throughout the region, as Ukraine strives to protect its resources and ensure the well-being of its citizens.

# Arab nations plotting alternative to Trump's Gaza plan

By Dave Oludare Oso

Optimism in the Arab world that US President Donald Trump might bring a permanent end to the war in the Gaza Strip and, with it, stability to the tumultuous Middle East, soared as he was given a lion's share of the credit for ushering in the current ceasefire.

But that hope has faded quickly since Trump suggested a plan to force Gaza's entire population out and to "take over" the decimated Palestinian territory to develop it as a vacation destination.

Trump said the roughly 2.3 million Palestinians should be moved to Egypt and Jordan, apparently to make way for investors to move in and "just clean out the whole thing."

The president's suggestion sent a shockwave of confusion and anger sweeping across the Arab nations that surround Israel, and beyond.

"In Egypt, we have warned since the beginning of the crisis that what was happening was an attempt to render the Gaza Strip uninhabitable, paving the way for the displacement of the Palestinians," Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi said several days after Trump first suggested his plan.

"I state it unequivocally: The displacement of the Palestinian people from their place is an injustice. We cannot condone or be a part of the unjust displacement of Palestinians."

Meeting earlier this month in Washington with Trump, Jordan's King Abdullah II, asked about the president's proposal, said Egypt was working on an alternative plan with other Arab countries.

"We will be in Saudi Arabia to discuss how we can work with the president and with the United States," Abdullah told reporters. "Let's wait until the Egyptians



can come and present it to the [U.S.] president, and not get ahead of ourselves."

On Friday, a meeting to discuss that alternative proposal for Gaza's future will take place in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. While Mr. Trump has continued to insist that Egypt and Jordan will rehome the Palestinians from Gaza, his administration has also said it remains open to other suggestions.

"Right now, the only one who's stood up and said, 'I'm willing to help do it,' is Donald Trump," Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in an interview last week. "All these other leaders, they're going to have to step up. If they've got a better idea, then now is the time."

An Egyptian plan for Gaza takes shape

"Egypt is putting together a comprehensive, phased plan that seeks to rehabilitate Gaza," Egyptian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Tamim Khallaf told CBS News on Wednesday. "The plan will span several years that would entail sequential phases of removing rubble and reconstruction."

"It will be conducted in a way to ensure that Palestinians in Gaza remain in their

homeland," said Khallaf, adding that the plan "will be operationally both realistic and workable."

Funding for the herculean task of rebuilding Gaza will be a vital component of any plan for after the war. As of January, the U.N. and World Bank estimated that 72% of the territory's housing, 84% of its health facilities and 92% of its primary roads had been damaged or totally destroyed, and the bombing continued for another month from that point.

Khallaf told CBS News that Egypt was "in talks with the United Nations, through the U.N. Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, to jointly organize an international conference in Egypt for early recovery and reconstruction in Gaza, which will be essential to provide emergency relief activities and secure necessary funds to see the plan come to fruition and restore life back to Gaza."

The plan being discussed in Riyadh is expected to be officially endorsed at an Arab summit scheduled for March 4 in Cairo. The plan is also expected to garner backing from further afield.

# Labour group files lawsuit against Trump administration over mass firing By Olamilekan Botti

Labor groups have filed a lawsuit against the Trump administration, claiming that tens of thousands of probationary federal employees were unlawfully terminated as part of a broader initiative to reform the federal workforce. The complaint, lodged on Wednesday evening in a federal court in San Francisco, raises serious questions about the authority of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in overseeing federal employment practices.

According to the labor groups, the OPM issued directives on February 13 that led to the mass firing of probationary employees under the pretext of performance issues. The plaintiffs argue that such actions exceeded the OPM's jurisdiction, which they claim does not extend to directing federal agencies to dismiss employees. The lawsuit contends that Congress, not the OPM, retains the power to govern federal employment and allocate funds for personnel expenses across U.S. administrative agencies.

"OPM, the federal agency tasked with enforcing our nation's employment laws, has executed one of the most significant employment frauds in American history, misleading tens of thousands of workers into believing they were dismissed for performance reasons when that was not the case," the complaint asserts. This bold claim underscores the gravity of the allegations against the administration.

As of Thursday, the OPM directed inquiries regarding the lawsuit to the Department of Justice, which has yet to issue a public response. The controversy surrounding the firings has drawn attention not only from labor groups but also from legal experts who are monitoring the case closely for its implications on federal employment practices.



Typically, federal employees undergo a probationary period of up to one year, though this duration can be extended based on the specific employment context. The current administration, led by President Trump and supported by Elon Musk, who oversees the newly established Department of Government Efficiency, is pursuing an aggressive agenda aimed at reducing the size of the federal government. This includes significant job cuts, which have raised alarms among labor advocates and workers alike.

The plaintiffs in the lawsuit represent a coalition of influential labor organizations, including the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, AFGE Local 1216 in San Francisco, and the United Nurses Associations of California/Union of Health Care Professionals. Each group has voiced strong opposition to the administration's actions, arguing that the mass firings not only violate established employment laws but also undermine the rights of federal workers.

The legal battle is set against a backdrop

of ongoing national debate regarding the efficiency and size of the federal workforce. Proponents of reduced government spending argue that streamlining operations is necessary for economic recovery, while critics warn that such measures can lead to detrimental impacts on public service and employee rights.

As the lawsuit unfolds, it is expected to attract widespread attention from lawmakers, labor advocates, and the public. The outcome will likely have far-reaching consequences for federal employment policies and the future of labor relations within the government.

In a time of heightened scrutiny regarding the administration's policies, this case serves as a pivotal moment for both labor rights and federal governance, highlighting the tension between efficiency measures and the protection of workers' rights. The legal proceedings will undoubtedly illuminate the complexities of federal employment law and the responsibilities of agencies like the OPM in maintaining fair labor practices.

# UN condemns Hamas for 'abhorrent' parade of hostage coffins

By Olamilekan Botti

Hamas, parading the coffins of four hostages, has drawn severe condemnation from the United Nations Human Rights chief, Volker Turk, who described the act as "abhorrent and cruel," asserting that it contravenes international law.

This event, characterized as a "disgusting spectacle," took place in Khan Yunis, a city in central Gaza, where the coffins were believed to contain the remains of Shiri Bibas, four-year-old Ariel, his infant brother Kfir, and 85-year-old Oded Lifthitz.

During the event, Hamas supporters watched as masked fighters clad in black carried the coffins through crowds of onlookers, culminating in a presentation on stage.

Behind the coffins was a provocative poster depicting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as a vampire, with blood dripping from his fangs, further politicizing the already tense atmosphere. The image served as a stark reminder of the deep-seated animosity that characterizes the ongoing conflict.

As the coffins were handed over to the Red Cross, Israeli authorities expressed significant concerns regarding the potential for booby traps.

Reports indicated that the coffins had been locked, and Hamas did not provide any keys, raising alarms about the safety of those involved in the handover process.

The fear was that the coffins might have been rigged to detonate, a tactic not unheard of in the context of the ongoing violence.

In his statement, Volker Turk emphasized the necessity of treating the remains of the deceased with dignity, reiterating that any transfer of bodies must adhere to the prohibition against cruel, inhuman, or



degrading treatment. He stressed the importance of respecting the dignity of both the deceased and their families, underscoring the profound impact such acts have on the grieving process.

Following the handover, military engineers were tasked with examining whether any personal belongings belonging to the hostages had been returned alongside the bodies.

The coffins, draped in Israeli flags, have since been transported to the Abu Kabir forensic institute in Jaffa, Tel Aviv.

There, forensic teams are set to conduct formal identification procedures, pledging to do so "as efficiently and respectfully as possible," while maintaining compassion for the families involved.

The incident has sparked outrage beyond the immediate context, with groups such as North West Friends of Israel, a UK-based organization, condemning Hamas for what they termed a "disgusting spectacle."

They criticized the terrorist group for using the tragic circumstances of innocent children to propagate their

agenda, referring to the act as a display of "Jew-hating" sentiment.

The broader implications of this event extend into the ongoing conflict between Hamas and Israel, highlighting the tragic human toll of the violence. As families mourn the loss of their loved ones, the politicization of grief and tragedy only deepens the wounds inflicted by years of conflict.

In light of this incident, the international community is once again reminded of the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The actions of Hamas have reignited discussions about the ethical responsibilities of all parties involved in such deeply tragic circumstances.

As the situation continues to unfold, the call for accountability and respect for human rights remains paramount, with hopes that future actions will reflect a commitment to dignity and peace.

The UN's strong stance against the parade of hostages' coffins serves as a critical reminder of the need for compassion and respect in the face of ongoing violence, urging all parties to consider the profound human impact of their actions.

# Spanish court fines ex-football chief €10,800 over World Cup kiss

By Dave Oludare Oso

Luis Rubiales has been found guilty of sexually assaulting the footballer Jenni Hermoso after Spain's victory at the Women's World Cup final in 2023. But the court acquitted him and the three others accused of the charge of coercion in the case.

A Spanish court on Thursday, February 20, convicted former football chief Luis Rubiales of sexual assault over the forced kiss he gave star forward Jenni Hermoso and fined him €10,800. But the court acquitted him and the three others accused of the charge of coercion in the case.

Prosecutors had sought a prison term of two-and-a-half years for Rubiales – one year for sexual assault and 18 months for coercion – for having allegedly pressured the player to downplay the incident.

Rubiales was accused of sexual assault for kissing Hermoso in 2023 following Spain's triumph in the women's World Cup in Australia, as well as coercion for allegedly trying to convince her to downplay the incident afterward.

The global outcry over the kiss forced Rubiales to resign in disgrace and thrust the spotlight on the prevalence of macho culture and sexism in sports.

Hermoso, 34, said on the opening day of the trial on February 3 that she felt



“disrespected” after a non-consensual kiss that “should not happen in any social or work setting.” But Rubiales, 47, told the court on Tuesday that he was “totally sure” Hermoso consented to the kiss as she went up to receive her winner's medal, which was broadcast live around the world, and denied putting pressure on her after the incident.

Former president of the Spanish football federation, Luis Rubiales, accused of sexual assault and coercion over forcible kiss, reacts to media as he leaves after taking the stand during his trial at the court of San Fernando de Henares, east of Madrid, on February 11, 2025. OSCAR DEL POZO/AFP

He conceded he “made a mistake” on the podium, saying he should have “been in a more institutional role,” but denied any offence had been committed. Rubiales' stance on the

stand contrasted with the defiance he displayed when the scandal broke.

During an emergency federation meeting in August 2023, he minimized the importance of the kiss and defied calls for his resignation, railing against “false feminism.”

Rubiales resigned in September of that year after FIFA suspended him and Spanish prosecutors opened an investigation into alleged sexual assault. He had been federation chief since 2018.

Hermoso, the all-time top scorer for the Spain women's team who now plays for Mexican club Tigres, was not called up to the national squad immediately after the World Cup. But new coach Montse Tome said she wanted to protect the player and denied omitting her from the squad was a “punishment.”

# Pep Guardiola realizes Man City faces impending reckoning

By Olamilekan Botti

Following Manchester City's stunning 3-3 draw against Feyenoord in the Champions League last November, a game where they squandered a 3-0 lead in a mere 15 minutes, a palpable sense of concern permeated the dressing room. The worry wasn't solely about the team's performance, but rather the unsettling demeanor of Pep Guardiola. The result served as a stark confirmation: City was in crisis, their season teetering on the brink of collapse. The dream of lifting the European Cup once again, a goal Guardiola had passionately shared with City owner Sheikh Mansour the previous summer in Abu Dhabi, appeared increasingly unattainable. This grim reality was later cemented by their inevitable play-off exit to Real Madrid, marking the first time under Guardiola's leadership that they failed to reach the last 16.

In those moments, after enduring a string of five consecutive defeats, City had seemingly rediscovered their winning formula, only to have it snatched away in the 74th minute, exposing their underlying insecurities and vulnerabilities. These shortcomings were etched across Guardiola's face. Throughout the game, the City manager was observed nervously scratching at his skin, drawing blood with his fingernails. Upon entering the dressing room, some players were taken aback by his visibly blotchy complexion. While they were accustomed to Guardiola's intense passion and eccentricities, this felt different, more profound.

Later, Guardiola reportedly retreated to the solitude of his office, seeking solace. He appeared to have had a restless night. The following day, staff members recounted encountering a bleary-eyed manager at the training ground, his mood still somber. "It is not a good morning," he allegedly confessed, perhaps having privately acknowledged that he and City had miscalculated this season, and a reckoning was inevitable.

Much of the scrutiny inevitably centers on Guardiola himself, the most celebrated manager of his generation. Yet, he is also a



figure known for an intensity that exacts a heavy toll on both himself and those around him. This intensity was a key factor in his departure from Barcelona, where the stress triggered chronic back problems, leading to a year-long sabbatical in New York. It also played a role in his exit from Bayern Munich after three consecutive Champions League semi-final defeats.

Even those closest to him express surprise that he has remained at City for nearly nine years, having signed a two-year contract extension last November, just five days before the fateful Feyenoord match. The initial expectation was that he would commit for only another 12 months. Some suggest he is in dire need of another break.

Guardiola has since maintained that he harbors no regrets about extending his commitment until 2027. Sources indicate that part of his motivation was to rectify the situation with a squad clearly in need of a rebuild. Nevertheless, the reality remains that if Guardiola were to approach City chairman Khaldoon Al Mubarak seeking an immediate departure, the club would not stand in his way, such is the depth of their relationship.

Concerns persist regarding the immense pressure Guardiola faces, the pressure he imposes upon himself, and the long-term

sustainability of such intensity. He recently offered two revealing interviews. In one, with Spanish chef Dani Garcia, he spoke of the "loneliness of the football manager" and the absence of "consolation" in defeat once "you close that bedroom door and turn off the light."

The mind drifts back to that night after the Feyenoord debacle.

In the other interview, conducted last December with his friend and former teammate Luca Toni, Guardiola candidly disclosed how football impacts his health, revealing that he suffers from a skin condition requiring antihistamines – hence the blotches after the Feyenoord game – and that he struggles to "digest food properly," sometimes subsisting solely on soup in the evenings.

In fairness, Guardiola has never eaten on match days until after the game, even during periods of triumph. Afterward, he sometimes indulges in Spanish ham and a glass of red wine, passionately recounting every detail of the match to those around him. Even then, he remains restless and constantly on the move.

Guardiola insisted he was "fine" just days later, but he has frequently alluded to feeling as though he is not "good enough" during this slump. Initially, this seemed like a tactic to deflect pressure, perhaps even a form of faux humility, but it is in danger of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Adding to the concern is a comment from Manel Estiarte, City's head of player support and protocol, and a close confidant, who mentioned the "law of 32 minutes" – the time he estimated Guardiola could discuss another subject before inevitably returning to football.

Such relentless focus must be exhausting, and it was revealing how emotionally Guardiola spoke about Jürgen Klopp when the German announced his departure from Liverpool, citing a lack of energy to continue. There was genuine empathy.