



Human &
Environmental
DEVELOPMENT AGENDA



Nigerian anti-corruption campaigner detained

International groups condemn detention and fanciful charges

International anti-corruption and human rights groups have strongly condemned the detention of leading Nigerian anti-corruption activist Olanrewaju Suraju of HEDA, one of the first non-governmental groups to expose corruption allegations surrounding the acquisition of the OPL 245 oil field by oil multinationals Shell and Eni.

Mr Suraju, along with the NGOs Corner House, Global Witness and Re:Common, has been accused by the former Nigerian Attorney General Mohammed Adoke of forging an email that formed part of the prosecution case in the recently concluded trial of the two multinationals and 11 other defendants in Milan. The defendants were all acquitted.

The email was sent to an employee of JP Morgan Chase, the bank that held the proceeds of the deal on behalf of the Federal Government of Nigeria. It was signed by a Mohammed Bello Adoke.

The email was from an address associated with a company owned by Aliyu Abubakhar, who is charged along with Adoke in Nigeria with offenses related to the OPL 245 deal. Abubakhar denies wrongdoing in Nigeria, as does Adoke.

The email first came to light in 2021 as part of civil proceedings by the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) against JP Morgan Chase (JPMC) in the High Court in London, where it was disclosed by JPMC and cited by the FRN in support of its claim.

In a Joint Statement, Mr Suraju and the three NGOs have categorically denied Adoke's assertions that the email is a forgery, and that the forgery was done by the organisations behind the petitions that led to the prosecution of Shell, Eni and others in Italy and Nigeria.

The groups state:

"We recognise that the email would certainly appear damaging to Mr Adoke. Specifically, it points to an apparent association between a Mohammed Bello Adoke and the Abubakar company that subsequently arranged the purchase of a house for former Attorney General Mr. Mohammed Bello Adoke SAN. Moreover, that association is specifically tied to the OPL 245 deal through the email.

We categorically deny that we forged the email: the notion is entirely fanciful. The email was obtained through a government-to-government request from Italy to the United Kingdom. The documentation is now part of the public record and Mr Suraju supplied the full intergovernmental correspondence to the investigating police officer. It is clear from the correspondence that the email was obtained from JP Morgan by the UK Serious Fraud Office and transmitted directly to the Milan Prosecutor. Neither Mr Suraju and his organisation HEDA, nor Corner House nor Global Witness nor Re:Common were involved at any stage in the chain of custody.

The original email as received by JPMC will have properties and electronic information that would enable the identification of the IP address from which it was sent. The Nigerian police should request this information and stop the harassment.

We will be raising Mr Suraju's totally unjustified detention with the board of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and calling for Nigeria's suspension pending an investigation into Mr Suraju's detention and the motivation for the allegations of forgery.”

The statement signed by Nicholas Hildyard of Cornerhouse, Simon Taylor of Global Witness, Luca Manes of Re:Common and Arigbabu Sulaimon of HEDA calls for proper investigation of the forgery allegation and immediate halt to the targeting of Mr Suraju and HEDA for attack. It also urges other human rights defenders and anti-corruption campaigners to lend their solidarity.