

**THE INAUGURATION OF THE
HUMAN RIGHTS INVESTIGATION PANEL**

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, THE PRESIDENT
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE ARMED FORCES
CHIEF OLUSEGUN OBASANJO, GCFR
AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE
HUMAN RIGHTS INVESTIGATION PANEL
ON MONDAY, 14TH JUNE, 1999
AT THE STATE HOUSE, ABUJA
AT 11.00 A.M.**

Your Excellency, the Vice-President of the
Federal Republic of Nigeria,
The Secretary to the Government of the Federation,
Chairman and Members of the Human Rights
Investigation Panel,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I welcome you all to this very important occasion which marks the formal inauguration of the Human Rights Investigation Panel. The Investigation Panel being inaugurated today is consistent with this Administration's policy of openness and transparency in the conduct of Government business as well as our determination to heal the wounds of the past and quickly put the ugly past behind us so as to continue to stretch our hands of fellowship and friendship to all Nigerians for complete reconciliation based on truth and knowledge of the truth in our hand.

We want to reconcile all those who feel alienated by the past political events, heal wounds inflicted on our people and restore harmony in our country. We want the injured and the seemingly injured to be reconciled with their oppressors or seeming oppressors. That is the way to move forward. I have, therefore, invited eminent Nigerians of high repute to investigate cases of human rights abuses committed since last democratic dispensation and to make appropriate recommendations. This all important assignment calls for dedication, fairness, firmness, justice and equity. I know that with your proven integrity, coupled with your track records, you will discharge your responsibility without fear or favour. And you will help us to scale over an unprecedented wicked and oppressive era in our history and propose measures for such an era never to repeat itself.

The members of the Investigation Panel are as follows :

(i)	Justice Oputa	..	..	..	..	..	<i>Chairman</i>
(ii)	Abubakar Ali Kura Michika	..	..	..	..	..	<i>Member</i>
(iii)	Rev. Matthew Kuka	..	..	..	..	..	<i>Member</i>
(iv)	Mrs Elizabeth Pam	..	..	..	..	..	<i>Member</i>
(v)	Alhaji Adamu Lawal Bamalli	..	..	..	..	..	<i>Member</i>
(vi)	Dr Tunji Abayomi	..	..	..	..	..	<i>Member</i>
(vii)	Mrs Modupe Areola	..	..	..	..	..	<i>Member</i>
(viii)	Mr T. D. Oyelade	..	..	..	..	..	<i>Secretary</i>

Your terms of reference are clear, namely :

- (i) To ascertain or establish, to whatever extent the evidence and circumstances may permit, the causes, nature and extent of human rights violations or abuses and in particular all known or suspected cases of mysterious deaths and assassinations or attempted assassinations committed in Nigeria, since last democratic dispensation.
- (ii) To identify the person or persons, authorities, institutions or organisations which may be held accountable for such mysterious deaths, assassinations or attempted assassinations or other violations or abuses of human rights and to determine the motives for the violations or abuses, the victims and circumstances thereof and the effect on such victims or the society generally.
- (iii) To determine whether such abuses or violations were the product of deliberate state policy or the policy of any of its organs or institutions or individual or whether they arose from the abuse by state officials or their office or whether they were the acts of any political organisation, liberation movement or other group or individual.
- (iv) To recommend measures which may be taken whether, judicial, administrative, legislative or institutional to redress past injustices and to prevent or forestall future violations or abuses of human rights.

This Administration will do everything possible to address all issues that tend to bring our country into dispute, or perpetuate injustice, conflict and the violation of human rights. You should therefore appreciate the magnitude and importance of the work expected to be carried out by you. The task before you is not only demanding, but also vital for the socio-political well being of our people and the nation. All the rights of every Nigerian as enshrined in our constitution must be protected and respected.

Ladies and Gentlemen, bearing in mind the sensitive nature of your assignment and the importance attached to it, you are expected to be tactful, and at the same time to maintain a very high level of integrity. You are also empowered to call for memoranda as you deem fit. I have every confidence that you will live up to the high expectations of our people and will carry out your duty diligently and without fear or favour but with love and justice which should be the foundation of our interaction in this country.

Let me, at this juncture, congratulate you and wish you every success in your assignment. I now have the honour to inaugurate the Human Rights Investigation Panel.

Thank you and God bless.

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