

7 February 2020
Lagos, Nigeria



JOINT PRESS STATEMENT: DEMAND REPEAL OF KEKE BAN & OTHER ANTI-POOR POLICIES HAVING EXTREME ADVERSE IMPACTS ON PERSONS LIVING WITH DISABILITY & THE URBAN POOR; CALL FOR REVERSAL OF ANTI-POOR POLICY APPROACH IN LAGOS STATE

The Physically Challenged Empowerment Initiative (PCEI), the Nigerian Slum / Informal Settlement Federation (Federation) and Justice & Empowerment Initiatives – Nigeria (JEI) today stand with ordinary Lagosians and particularly persons living with disability and hardworking urban poor residents whose livelihoods and transportation systems have been decimated by the recent, overnight ban on keke (tricycle) and okada (motorbike) across Lagos State. Together, we condemn the blanket ban – just the latest anti-poor policy and practice to be implemented in Lagos State – and call for an immediate repeal while more suitable, pro-people regulations are developed.

Our members were shocked to wake up on the morning of 1 February 2020 to find the overnight implementation of an outright ban on keke and okada across Lagos State, with ruthless and illegal enforcement activities, including the seizure of vehicles that were not even moving on the streets. This ban left ordinary Lagosians stranded *en masse* at bus stops across the State and decimated the livelihoods and investments of those involved in lawful and useful transportation businesses.

Some of the worst impacts of this policy have been on persons living with disabilities across Lagos State, many of whom have over recent years been supported by PCEI to leave street begging for more dignified and lawful work of driving kekes. Our members have invested heavily to learn how to drive, get the requisite licenses, and purchase kekes that they have proudly driven until 31 January 2020, providing for themselves and their families. The ban has witnessed several of their kekes seized on 1 February 2020 from within a taxi park where they were parked respecting the ban; up to date, their petitions to the Lagos State Task Force and Commissioner of Police have received no response.

Beyond these violations of our members' rights to livelihood and to property, the chaos in the now even more inadequate transportation system has left ordinary citizens stranded at bus stops across the State. For PCEI members, the impacts have been worse since many of them struggle already to navigate Lagos traffic; now they are practically trampled in the rush for buses and have been unable to either move themselves using their network's keke fleet or move long distances self-propelled. This amounts to a severe assault on their right to mobility and, moreso, their right to dignity.

We note this is just the latest in the current Lagos State administration's anti-poor approach to governing our state and city. During recent months, we have witnessed the forced eviction of over a dozen of our member communities from Second Badagry/Adidas Field to Okun Ayo and Tarkwa Bay. Although the most recent eviction campaign across Lagos island communities at first appeared to be led by the Nigerian Navy and the Federal Government, the State Government has now boldly come out to state its support and identify its interests in benefiting from the mass rights violations and suffering of citizens by developing luxury tourist resort at Tarkwa Bay.

Meanwhile, the peaceful protest staged by hundreds of evictees and other communities under threat to appeal to the Lagos State Governor and the House of Assembly on Tuesday, 28 January 2020 met false promises that our appeals would be responded to within 24 hours. Quite to the contrary, we have heard nothing from our elected leaders for nearly two weeks – only further statements of support for the brutal eviction campaign and new policies that attack the lives of the urban poor.

Forced evictions – the removal of people from the land or homes they occupy without sufficient legal or other protections – is a gross violation of international human rights law binding on Nigeria. The Nigerian Constitution and human rights law domesticated in Nigeria guarantee the rights to adequate shelter/housing, livelihood, due process of law, and dignity, among others. Indeed, a 2017 Lagos High Court judgment found that forced evictions without adequate notice and resettlement violate the right to dignity enshrined in Section 34 of the Constitution.

Forced evictions are not only illegal and unconstitutional, they are counter-productive to security and to the development objectives Lagos and Nigeria as a whole. Forced evictions cause mass homelessness, loss of livelihood, separation of families, interruption of education, physical and mental health consequences and death. Displaced communities and families are pushed into worsened poverty, which can only undermine security, as well as urban and national development.

The only ray of hope in this dark period has been from the Federal High Court in Lagos, which on 30 January 2020 granted interim injunctions restraining the Nigerian Navy from carrying out further forced evictions and demolitions of island communities across Lagos and from harassing residents. Despite these orders, the demolition of Tarkwa Bay continued and, as at date, nearly the entire community has been destroyed. Worse yet, within hours of the court orders being served on the Nigerian Navy and other Respondents, at least one of the communities that went to court to prevent forced eviction was allegedly raided in the middle of the night by Naval officers who beat sleeping residents and reportedly stripped one woman naked before arresting her in handcuffs.

We are shocked by these events and condemn the ever-worsening situation for the urban poor and persons living with disabilities in Lagos State. We join hands with so many other citizens movements and civil society to call for the repeal of the ban on keke and okada, while more reasonable policy measures to regulate and ensure safe and accessible transportation are developed in partnership with the people and particularly the urban poor and persons living with disabilities. We likewise demand respect for court orders and the immediate suspension of the campaign of forced evictions, intimidation and harassment by the Nigerian Navy acting in complicity with our elected leaders. Lastly, we call for a break with the current trend toward every-more anti-poor urban governance and for our elected leaders to work with us to build more inclusive and more liveable cities for all

SIGNED:

Megan S. Chapman
JEI – Nigeria
+234 (0) 818 719 6021
megan@justempower.org

Mohammed Zanna
**Physically Challenged
Empowerment Initiative**
+234 (0) 704 639 6371

Akinrolabu Samuel
**Nigerian Slum/Informal
Settlement Federation**
+234 (0) 803 921 4391