

(Updated): NAFDAC Must Refund N3b-N3.5b Forcefully Collected From Over 3000 Paying Traders At Onitsha Drug Market With 20% Interest
-Intersociety

...the Agency's DG, its South-East Director and other top officials involved must submit themselves to public accountability by stepping down for thorough and unbiased investigations into the Agency's operational activities at Onitsha Drug Market

Onitsha, Eastern Nigeria
Friday, May 30, 2025

The heart of **the International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law (Intersociety)**; Nigeria's leading research and investigative rights, rule of law, democracy and security and safety advocacy group since 2008, is strongly calling on the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control to unconditionally refund the N3b-N3.5b forcefully collected from over 3000 paying-traders at the Onitsha Drug Market. Such a refund must be attached with 20% interest. We also understand that between 3,500 and 3,800 affected traders have been forced to pay as of Thursday, May 29, 2025, according to sources linked to the Market. We are bold to say that no number of excuses or policy defense and sanctification can justify such imposition and forceful collection from traders that have been kept out of their legitimate businesses for more than 90 days. It is also our insistence that we are steadily in solidarity with over 90% of the traders in the Market who are genuine drug traders including those trading on pharmaceutically produced and supplied products and lifesaving and body system supplement drugs. We are also in no way in support of those trading on expired, counterfeit, substandard and fake drugs or products.

It must be reminded that the Onitsha Drug Market is presently 14,000-Person strong, comprising about 7000 business owners occupying about 5000 market stalls and packing stores and estimated 7000 others comprising apprentices, salesgirls, hawkers and others providing menial services. It is also recalled that we at **Intersociety** have consistently led the way in the campaign for the unconditional re-opening of the Market and public accountability by NAFDAC regarding its militarist, extortionist and collective punishment operations in the Market. We further submitted more than ten public interest petitions and issued several media statements thereto. The letters were successfully sent to relevant top government establishments including NAFDAC DG (twice), Gov Charles Soludo of Anambra State (twice), Minister of Health (twice), Police IGP, Army Chief of Staff, DG-SSS, the NSA, Senate and House of Reps Committees on Health and NAFDAC, the Senator, representing Anambra North Senatorial District, House of Reps Members representing the Ogbaru and the Onitsha Federal Constituencies as well as the Speaker, Anambra State House of Assembly. Disappointingly, even though the referenced public interest petitions were attached with far-reaching findings, demands and recommendations and under extreme urgency and public importance, only those addressed to the Anambra State House of Assembly Speaker, Hon Afam Ogene and Senator Tony Nwoye received a degree of legislative attention.

Shockingly, NAFDAC DG received hers twice with evidential proofs of delivery but chose to ignore them till date. Time and space may not allow us at **Intersociety** to reproduce mind-boggling findings and far-reaching recommendations made or reflected in the referenced public interest petitions. Apart from the referenced petitions of ours including those dated February 24 and 25, 2025 and April 29, 2025, and several media statements connected thereto; we have also been following the goings-on at the Market including reading and analyzing recent statements by NAFDAC DG, Prof Mojisola Christianah Adeyeye who was first appointed for five-year tenure as NAFDAC DG on Dec 1, 2017 and re-appointed for second and final term on Dec 1, 2022. The NAFDAC DG's referenced statements included that of May 26, 2025, in which she falsely accused a leading social media influencer, "Very Dark Man" (Martins Vicent Otse) of **"colluding with fake drug merchants and inciting public unrest"**.

As if that was not enough, the NAFDAC DG exhibited a culture of incorrigibility and went further to incite security agencies against Activist Citizen Martins Vicent Otse (Very Dark Man) and falsely accused him of "violating the Cyberstalking Act". The NAFDAC DG had also in the same statement claimed that "the Onitsha Drug Market was re-opened on March 9, 2025, and over 2,500 traders occupying 3,500 shops have resumed operations, having complied with the necessary regulatory procedures" (including payment of the sundry extortionist fees under contention). The NAFDAC DG issued another statement on Tuesday, May 27, 2025, consciously or unwittingly indicting her Agency by admitting the imposition and forceful collection of the sundry extortionist fees she tagged: "administrative fee of N5m (per product/brand) for selling unregistered (multinational) products which was later reduced to N200,000 after pleas" She also admitted that her Agency collected another extortionist fee tagged: a separate N2m charge for violating Good Storage and Distribution Practices, also reduced to N500,000".

Contrary to the National Agency for Food and Drug Control and Administration's DG's claims, there are three major types or categories of extortion fees introduced and enforced by the Agency at Onitsha Drug Market; namely: "Poor Storage Fee of N700,000" for every market store owner and a separate "N200,000 Poor Storage Fee" for every packing store owner at the Market. Third extortionist fee is labeled: "N200,000 charge for each multinational drug or product and its wholesaler including lifesaving and food and body system supplement drugs or products unregistered by NAFDAC". Imposed, too, was self-incriminating undertakings made mandatory for every payer-trader at the Market. In other words, a wholesaler of such products who has "complied with NAFDAC's extortionist conditions" is likely to have paid the Agency as follows: N1.4m (for having not registered each of brands or products) if he or she has seven brands or products; another N200,000 (for poor storage) if he or she has a packing store and another N700,000 (for poor storage) if he or she has a market store. We have also investigated and found that NAFDAC effected the collection of the sundry extortionist fees by using the Agency's CBN-linked account number and details as follows: **Account Name: NAFDAC Project TSA; Account No. 3000063142; Bank: Central Bank of Nigeria; Payment Channel: Real Time Gross Settlement.**

Inside NAFDAC's Copy Of Operational Illegalities That Must Be Looked Into:

It is further reminded that NAFDAC has a canopy of operational illegalities and gross conducts in the Market to deal with to restore public confidence in its statutory operations. Inside the canopy of the Agency's operational illegalities at the Onitsha Drug Market include (1) breaking into traders' shops and packing stores in their absence and carting away, seizing and confiscating container-loads of unexpired and pharmaceutically supplied and certified products including multinational lifesaving and food and body system supplement drugs worth hundreds of billions of naira; (2) false labeling of the entire traders of the Market as "merchants of fake drugs" and the Market as "headquarters of fake drugs in Nigeria"; (3) commercialization and corruption of the Agency's operations at Onitsha Drug Market no thanks to the Agency's deployed soldiers of the Nigerian Army and police personnel, including strong allegations of diversion and selling of the seized products running into tens, if not hundreds of millions of naira and swelling of the deployed perpetrators' bank accounts; (4) carting away and diversion of huge cash sums running into tens, if not hundreds of millions of naira, left behind by traders in their market stalls; (5) massive looting of trading and feeding items belonging to non-drug traders at the Market including boutiques, fast food shops, liquor and soft drink outlets, etc. These are to mention but few.

Commendation: We sincerely thank the doggedness of the VDM (Martins Vicent Otse), His Excellency, Mr. Peter Obi, Senator Tony Nwoye, Hon Afam Ogene, Sir Ifeanyi Ejiofor Esquire, an international Human Rights Lawyer, leaders of **Intersociety**, a cross section of the Nigerian media including print, electronic, audio-visual, online and digital; the Unite Nigeria Group led by Sir Peter Okala, the South-East CD and HURIDE led by Comrade Uzor A. Uzor, the Anambra CLO led by Comrade Vincent Ezekwueme, the Njenje Media TV, selected leaders of the Onitsha Drug Market (intelligence supply) and other Human Rights Activists including Comrades Damian Ogudike, Chibueze Nwajiaku, Chinenye Nwamebe, etc. We urge the above named not to rest on their oars until the wrongs perpetrated in the Market are righted and those involved sanctioned.

Calls: It is therefore our position that the NAFDAC DG (Prof Mojisola Christianah Adeyeye), Dr Martins Iluyomade (South-East Director) and other top officials of the Agency should honorably step down to ensure unbiased, thorough and conclusive investigations into the Agency's operational activities at Onitsha Drug Market. Strongly condemned is indiscriminate resort by NAFDAC and other Government Agencies to the abrogated Cyberstalking Act of 2015, now used as instruments of State terror. The rush with which the Anambra State Police Command went into the matter and took side is a clear case in point and strongly condemned. It is shocking that the Anambra State Police Command is starkly ignorant of the amendments carried out in 2024 in the Cyberstalking Act of 2015, now cited as "Cyberstalking Act (as amended) 2024" in which its draconian Section 24 was surgically operated upon and most of State terror provisions deleted.

End.

Signed:

For: International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law

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