

- H.E.  
Prof Charles Chukwuma Soludo  
Executive Governor of Anambra State  
Governor's Office, The Light House  
Awka, Anambra State

Date:.....

- Rt. Hon Somtochukwu Udeze, PhD  
Speaker of Anambra State House of Assembly  
Speaker's Office, State House of Assembly Complex  
Awka, Anambra State

**Date: Wednesday, April 1, 2026**

**Dear Sirs,**

**Calling For Immediate Suspension In Office And Thorough Investigation Of Outgoing Mayor Emeka Orji Of Onitsha South Local Government Area Over His Alleged Involvement In Eleventh-Hour N3b Extortion Racketeering At Bridgehead, Ochanja And Other Onitsha South-Located Markets Through Unlawful Acts Of Multiple Taxation And Imposition And Collection Of Levies Already Contained In The State Gazetted Market Stallage Fees And Unlawful Others; As Well As Indiscriminate Invasion Of Markets And Locking And Revocation Of Market Stalls Or Threats To Do Same; Constant Harassment Of Market Traders And Other Conducts Unbecoming Of A Democratic Tier Of Government-In Gross Breach Of Sections 7 (1) And 162 (6) Of The 1999 Constitution And The Anambra State Local Government Administration Law, 2024**

**1. Constitutional Powers Of The Governor And The Speaker Over LGA Boss:**

By Section 7 , Subsection 1 of the Nigeria's 1999 Constitution, "...the Government of every State (including Government of Anambra State) shall ensure the existence of a Local Government System via a Law made by the State House of Assembly which shall provide for the establishment, structure, composition, finance and functions of such Councils (including the Onitsha South)"; and by Section 162 (6), "each State shall maintain a special account, to be called State Joint Local Government Account into which shall be paid all the allocations to the local government councils of the State from Federation Account and from the Government of the State".

Date:.....

**2. Exposing Estimated N3b Extortion Racketeering Involving Mayor Emeka Orji:**

By our investigation and gathered pieces of evidence, the Onitsha South outgoing Mayor, Mr Emeka Orji is presently involved in extortion racketeering estimated at more than N3b, involving estimated 22,000 market stalls with estimated 10,000 located at Bridgehead Market and 12,000 others at Ochanja Market and others located within the jurisdiction of Onitsha South Local Government Area. The above has been the case and widespread in recent months through indiscriminate encroachment and invasion of such markets and imposition of sundry unlawful levies on each of the affected market stalls.

3. Several markets have, as a result, been invaded by the outgoing Mayor and members of his taskforce using the State security outfit (Agunaechemba/Udo Ga Achi) who storm such crowded markets in blood day light with guns loaded with live bullets-and bands of unlawfully armed “Pestle and Machete Boys”. As if these were not enough, the affected market stalls are thereafter placed, militantly, under “Sealed and Revoked”, contrary to Sections 7 (1) and 162 (6) of the 1999 Constitution; done with clear intent to intimidate the affected traders including militantly forcing them into constant harassment and payment of a region of unlawful levies from their market spots to on-loading and offloading spots. The referenced extortion racketeering exercise is also characterized by making such payments in cash and outside official records without issuance of receipts; thereby raising serious fears and concerns over fiscal discipline including due process and accountability-making this petition very compelling.

The owners of the affected market stalls are also found to be given a matching order to pay different categories of unlawful fees per half or full stall as condition for re-opening their legitimately acquired, owned and built shops, sealed or revoked. A typical case in point is ongoing unlawful imposition and collection outside official records, of N50,000 per market stall “for not opening on time on Mondays”; using the enforcement of the end of “Monday Sit-at-Home” as a pretext. We had in February 2026 reported how the same outgoing Onitsha South Mayor and members of his taskforce stormed the Bridgehead Market in blood day

light and openly boasted and threatened to shut down “5000 market stalls and until their owners pay N50,000 for each of them (translating to N250m)”.

Date:.....

Among those present at the market on the said date were members of our investigative team. Another typical case in point was on March 16, 2026, when the Onitsha South LGA officials and those of the State Government stormed the Ogbogwu (Drug) Market at Brodhead and announced the closure of over 1000 market stalls for “failing to open their shops on time on Mondays”; after which the affected traders affected were directed to officials of the Onitsha South Council and directed to pay N50,000 for each stall before their shops could be unsealed”. It was also discovered that those who paid were not given or issued with any receipts till date. One of the affected traders with a serious health issue was made to wait for seven days, after which his market stall was re-sealed on 8<sup>th</sup> day for not paying the N50,000; and was only allowed on the 9<sup>th</sup> day after he presented a doctor’s report backing his serious ill-health.

**4. Hasty And Eleventh-Hour N3b “Stallage Allocation Revalidation” Exercise:**

By our detailed finding, not less than N3b extortion racketeering is presently taking place in the affected markets with estimated market stall capacity of 22,000 within the Onitsha South Council jurisdiction. The affected market stalls under extortionist target are divided into: “downstairs half and full stalls” and “upstairs half and full stalls”, with each of the half stalls being forced to pay N12, 000. From findings made from those already forced to pay, the N12,000 is paid in cash and never receipted or acknowledged in any form-thereby raising serious fears of zero official records and fraud including high possibility of such huge amounts ending up as “misappropriated” or “diverted extorted public funds”; more so when the present Onitsha South Council headed by outgoing Mayor Emeka Orji is winding up-with August 2026 as a possible terminal date.

Under the above possibility, such extortionist exercise with not less than N3b target will fizzle out once the era of the outgoing Mayor is gone-thereby exposing those already forced to pay, to face another round of extortion on the same subject matter in the era of a new administration in the Local Government Council. What makes the exercise more suspicious was that the imposition and

Date:.....

The notification was also copied to various local security outfits located within the Onitsha South and the Onitsha North Councils; a further indication that all markets under Onitsha South Council jurisdiction are targeted for the extortionist exercise, including Bridgehead, Ochanja and GUO Markets and parts of those located near the Onitsha Main Market. It is also the finding of **Intersociety** that as of the time of the issuance of the referenced notice, the Anambra State Government/Local Government Joint Revenue Taskforce was carrying out enumeration and numbering of all the market stalls at the same markets being targeted by the outgoing Mayor and his taskforce team-a clear case of duplicity, with intent to harass, intimidate, coerce and extort the entire market traders affected. We also observed in the course of our field investigation that no trader was asked to pay a dime for the market stall numbering and enumeration.

Apart from the ‘un-receipted’ cash payment of N12, 000 per half stall, as “Allocation Paper Re-Validation/Verification Fee”, there is also a ‘second tier extortionist exercise attached’, called “N40,000 for Missing/Lost Allocation Paper Recovery Fee.” Conservatively, the extortionist minimum of N3b is arrived at by multiplying N12,000 per half market stall into estimated 22, 000 half market stalls within the Onitsha South Council (including about 3,500 at Ogbogwu, 2,500 at Power Tools and 4000 others at Plumbing, Timber, Tinker, Iron Dealers and GUO Markets, among others-within the Bridgehead Central Market; in addition to 12,000 others at Ochanja and other markets within the Council.

**5. Traders Groaning Under Multiple Taxation And 260% Stallage Fee Increase:**

Traders of the affected markets and others are not only being chased about, harassed and intimidated by the Government of the State and its Local Government Councils especially in Onitsha South, Onitsha North, Oyi, Ogbaru, Awka North, Awka South, Idemmili North and Nnewi North, but they are also hellishly going through multiple taxation, sundry extortions and recent 260% increase in the payment of market stallage fees- from N9,100 per half stall in 2023

to over N33,000 per half stall (N66,000 per full stall) at end of 2025. For the record, Market Stallage Fees are unified yearly revenue generation drive by the Government of Anambra State and its Local Government System-whereby 30% is given to the host Local Government Council, about 60% to the State Government and 10% to the affected market leaderships.

Date:.....

Further investigation by **Intersociety** showed that about 50% of those that paid such fees are not issued with receipts upon payment. There are also a large number of those that had paid since 2023 without being receipted till date- that have not been issued with such receipts after their payment from 2023 to date- thereby raising serious concerns of the likelihood of fraud and corruption. Included in the Market Stallage Fees are: stallage, capitation, sanitation, fire service, development and traders' consolidated levies-totalling N33,000 per half stall per annum or N66,000 per full market stall.

## 6. **Demands:**

Having clearly, legally and satisfactorily established a case of "Hasty and Eleventh-Hour N3b Extortion Racketeering" against the outgoing Onitsha South Mayor (Emeka Orji), contrary to Sections 7(1) and 162 (6) of the 1999 Constitution and the Anambra State Local Government Administration Law, 2024, we hereby demand as follows:

- a. **Immediate suspension in office of the outgoing Mayor of Onitsha South by Governor Charles Soludo-led Executive Arm of the Government of Anambra State pending the outcome of unbiased and conclusion of investigation over his involvement in the subject matter illicit or unlawful exercise and conduct involving not less than N3b belonging to hardworking and law abiding traders of the affected markets.**
- b. **Immediate suspension of the ongoing exercise by the outgoing Mayo-dubbed: "Stallage Allocation Paper Re-Validation" Fee of N12,000 per half stall or N24,000 per full stall and the "Missing Allocation Paper Recovery fee of N40,000 per half stall".**
- c. **Our demand for immediate suspension or out-right cancellation of the extortionist exercise is borne out of the fact that it glaringly lacks due process and accountability and was ill-timed with likely dishonest intents.**

- d. Immediate and comprehensive audit and recovery of the amounts already extorted without being receipted or officially recorded.
- e. Immediate ban by the Government of Anambra State and the State Legislature of indiscriminate invasion of Bridgehead and Ochanja markets and others by the outgoing Mayor and members of his taskforce.

Date:.....

- f. Audit and recovery of all collected proceeds of extortion racketeering including those made from sealing and revocation of market stalls for “not opening on time on Mondays” and strongly suspected tens of millions of naira believed to have been raked in from thousands of traders heavily taxed or extorted for reconstructing their stalls from the scratch (downstairs market stalls) or upgrading others to upstairs market stalls.
- g. Comprehensive audit of all the collected stallage fees, especially those not receipted on the spot after payment covering 2023 to 2025. This shall be extended to all the 21 Local Government Areas across the State and their markets.
- h. Comprehensive and thorough probe by the State House of Assembly, of the Onitsha South Local Government Area and its outgoing Mayor regarding the subject matter under reference going by powers so vested by Sections 7(1) and 162 (6) of the 1999 Constitution.
- i. A matching order to the outgoing Onitsha South Mayor and members of his taskforce to clear the heaps of garbage littering the Ogbogwu/Power Tools and the Old Benin Park axis of the Service Lane of the Onitsha-Asaba Expressway, dotted and defaced since the past two months of February and March 2026.  
The outgoing Mayor and members of his taskforce should further be directed to commence the opening of blocked waterways and drainages within Onitsha South Council and stop non-indigenes loitering along Upper Iweka to Niger Bridgehead from littering and defacing the gutters around the area with faeces and urines and other waste materials.

**For: International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law**

- **Emeka Umeagbalasi**  
Criminologist-Researcher/Head  
International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law
- **Chidinma Evangeline Udegbumam, Esquire**  
Human Rights Lawyer/Head, Dept. of Campaign and Publicity  
International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law

Date:.....

- **Chinwe Umeche, Esquire**  
Human Rights Lawyer/Head, Democracy Dept.  
International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law
- **Obianuju Joy Igboeli, Esquire**  
Human Rights Lawyer/Head, Dept. of Civil Liberties and Rule of Law  
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**Attachments:**

- **Receipts of Payment of Stallage Fees (2023-2025)**
- **The Onitsha South Outgoing Mayor's Extortionist Notice of March 11, 2026**
- **A Video Clip of Heaps of Refuse Dotting and Littering the Ogbogwu Junction side of the Onitsha-Asaba Expressway**