

# Weekly Updates on the #EndSARS Judicial Panel of Inquiry - No. 2

31st October - 7th November 2020

In line with the demands of the youth to set up an independent body to oversee the investigation and prosecution of all reports of police misconduct, Judicial Panels of Inquiry have been set up in 29 states. The panels are expected to ensure justice for victims of the dissolved Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and other police units. While 29 states were to commence the constitution of their state panels our findings reveals that 28 have inaugurated their panels of inquiry. Data from 27 states indicated that there are a total of 53 women out of 252-panel members across the 27 states, representing 21% of panel members. While youth representation is at 18.2% which is 46 youth representatives out of 252-panel members across 27 states.



The Judicial Panels of Inquiry have begun sittings and collection of petitions/memoranda in at least 16 States. These states include - Akwa Ibom State, Anambra State, Bauchi State, Benue State, Ebonyi State, Edo State, Enugu State, Kaduna State, Katsina State, Kwara State, Lagos State, Niger State, Ondo State, Ogun State, Osun State and Plateau State, Taraba State with many inaugural sittings in the last week. Reports from the Yiaga Africa citizens observer deployed to the Lagos State Judicial panel of Inquiry reveals that: the panel sat for a total of 4 days and a total of 10 reports were made (5 oral and 5 written). The petitions include petitions against the defunct SARS unit, and out of the 10 presentations, 4 young persons and 4 women made presentations. Reports from the Observer in Ogun indicates that the sitting on November 5, 2020, had a total of 11 reports made (8 oral and 3 written). Of the 11 petitioners; 6 were young people and 1 a woman. For both states; 60% of the petitioners were victims of police brutality while 20% were family members of

victims and the other 20% government representatives. In addition, evidence tendered include; picture and footage of a supposed SARS official beating the victim, photos of a man brutally beaten by cops of the SARS operations, damaged phone, loan card, picture of a damaged car by gun bullets.

Yiaga Africa and Enough is Enough (EIE) Nigeria reiterates its recommendation to the panels to provide disaggregated data on its composition, deploy technology to promote participation, adopt a people-friendly mode of submission and provide effective and periodic communication on the panels.

Furthermore, Yiaga Africa and Enough is Enough (EIE) Nigeria note the following and recommend the following measures be adopted to ensure the Panels deliver on their responsibility adequately:

**1. Security Cooperation to Ensure Access to Information for the Panels:** there is a lack of cooperation from security agencies especially the military in granting access to the venue of the inquiry to independent and/or citizens observers and poor/lack of information provided to the panel to enable panel members adequately discharge their responsibility. Media Reports indicate that investigative visits by the Panel have been met with stiff resistance and opposition from security agencies (Nigerian military). We call on the security agencies to work with the panels in providing requisite information requested for and welcome this process as a critical reform process to improve the work of the security agencies. We call on the Panels to ensure transparency, fairness and participation as they sit and also conduct their responsibility without fear of intimidation by security agencies.

**2. Extend Reporting Timelines for Submission of Petitions/Memoranda:** We note that the Panels of Inquiry in some states have issued short timelines for the submission of memoranda. We, therefore, call on the panel to extend the deadlines for submission of memoranda, considering sufficient time the Panels have to work - in order to ensure all victims of police brutality submit their memoranda/petitions to the Panels.

**3. Deploy Technology to Promote Participation:** We call on the panels to embrace the use of technology via social media or traditional media channels to allow members of the public to follow live sittings of the panels and submit petitions and memoranda. This will promote transparency and build confidence in the process.

Signed

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