

Weekly Updates on the #EndSARS Judicial Panels of Inquiry - No. 3

9th - 14th November 2020

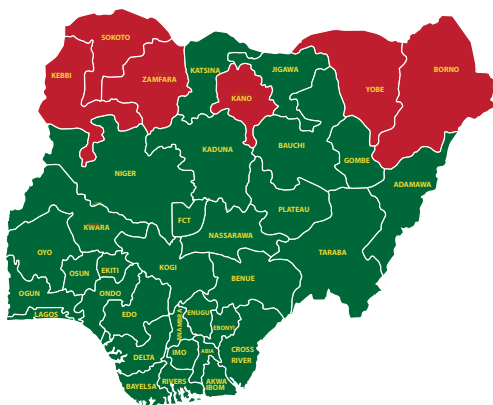


Police brutality remains a fundamental human rights issue which requires the state's commitment to concrete actions that ensures justice for citizens who have suffered different forms of brutality/violation. The setup of Judicial Panels of Inquiry across the states was a response to one of the #EndSARS protest demands for an end to police brutality and a system that ensures a process of healing and justice for victims when every indicted officer of the law is held accountable for their crimes. Yiaga Africa has deployed citizens monitors to track the proceedings of the panels.

Observations from the Judicial Panel of Inquiry revealed:

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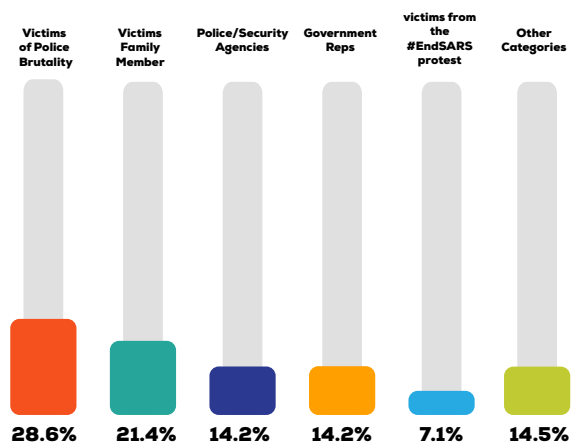
263
Panel Members

60 (22.8%)
Women

49 (18.6%)
Youth

Monitoring and Observatory of the #EndSARS Judicial Panels of Inquiry

Category of witnesses that have made submissions



- 1 Low Representation of Women and Youth:** Lagos was the first state to set-up a Panel and commence sitting. In the week under review, Bauchi and Oyo set-up and inaugurated their panels making it a total of 29 states and the FCT with a Judicial Panel of Inquiry set up to receive petitions on police brutality and related matters. Borno, Jigawa, Kano, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe and the Zamfara States are yet to set-up their Panels of Inquiry. With regards to composition, a total of 263 identified members are on the panel across the states with only 22.8% (60) women and 18.6% (49) youth.
- 2 Anambra State Leads on the Number of Petitions Submitted:** During the week under review, states received petitions as follows: Abia State - 32 petitions; Akwa Ibom - 16 petitions; Ebonyi State - 20 petitions; Taraba State - 11 petitions; Nasarawa State - 16 petitions; Enugu State - 58 petitions; Imo State - 2 petitions; Anambra - 114 petitions.
- 3 More Victims Approach the Panels for Justice:** Reports from the Yiaga Africa monitors shows that so far, 28.6% of witnesses that have made submissions are victims of police brutality; 21.4% are family members of victims of police brutality; 14.2% were police/security agencies; 14.2% were government representatives; 7.1% were victims from the #EndSARS protest while 14.5% fall into other categories.

4

Evidence provided to support petitions: So far evidence received by the panels include; pictures and video footage of victims of police brutality showing the victims beaten and with bruises, a car riddled with bullets by the Police, photocopies of car documents of a police officer's car burnt and of another officer's car destroyed within the police station by supposed hoodlums, pictures of a burnt truck by supposed hoodlums, samples of bullets used by the Nigerian Army and a flash drive containing video clips of the Lekki shooting.

5

Panels Encourage Youth Reps to be Confident in the Process and Petitioners to Trust the Process: The ongoing attacks, intimidation and freezing of accounts of young people who were part of the #EndSARS protests have raised major concerns about the government's sincerity in ensuring justice for victims. In Anambra, one of the youth representatives, Chukwuka Onsonwa, voiced his concerns about the level of intimidation and the freezing of accounts of some of his colleagues on the Lagos Panel. The Chair of the Panel, Hon. Justice Vero Ngozi Umeh (Rtd), noted that she has seen the media reports and while no member of the Anambra Panel was affected, she encouraged them to remain confident in the process as she will also work with the Governor of the state to ensure members of the #EndSARS protests were not victimised. Similarly, the Chair of the Panels in Ekiti and Osun encouraged citizens to approach the Panels without fear and for petitioners to follow through with their petitions as some petitioners submitted petitions and were not present to speak for fear of reprisal. In Lagos, the two youth representatives returned to the Panel sittings on Saturday, Nov 14th to ensure a quorum, issuing a statement on their rationale.

Yiaga Africa and Enough is Enough (EiE) Nigeria recommends the following:

1

The Federal and State Governments Refrain from the Continuous Attacks and Harassment of Members of the #EndSARS Movement: We note with concern the continuous attacks, harassment and clampdowns on some #EndSARS protesters, some of whom are serving on the Panels. In the previous reporting week, this was reported with respect to the freezing of the account of a youth representative on the Lagos Panel. Similarly, this week, it was reported that young citizens in Osun State were arrested for participating peacefully in the #EndSARS protests. Government has continued to demonstrate that its more interested in clamping down on fundamental rights, rather than addressing the critical issues of citizen engagement and police reform, which undermines the Judicial Panels. This does not endear the government to the citizens and should stop.

2

Timely Establishment, Inauguration of Representative Panels, Commencement of Sitting of Panels with Sufficient Time for Submissions: The delay in the establishment of Panels in 7 states, 4 weeks after the directive will present a challenge for the Panels to conduct their assignment in a timely fashion. The states where Panels have not been set up should immediately establish and inaugurate their Panels and ensure better representation of women and youth on the panels. In addition, there is a need for all states to commence their proceedings/sittings in order to investigate complaints of police brutality or related extrajudicial killings in their states in a timely fashion. The time frame for these panels is 6 months and some states like Kwara, Ondo, Enugu & Ekiti have their deadlines within a month of inauguration. We strongly recommend that adequate time is given for victims to submit their petitions.

3

Create Public-Facing Channels to Promote Participation and Transparency: We note and commend the Panels in Kwara, Ogun and the Lagos States as well as the National Human Rights Commission Panel in FCT for deploying technology to promote participation and transparency via public-facing channels and call on other state Panels to do the same. This will further promote transparency and build confidence in the process.

Signed

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