

**TEXT OF A PRESS CONFERENCE ADDRESSED BY DR. ABIOLA AKIYODE  
- AFOLABI ON THE SUSPENDED ACTION ON THE  
#NigerianWomenOccupyNass  
ORGANISED BY WOMANIFESTO ON THE FIVE GENDER BILLS HELD ON  
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2022**

*Distinguished ladies and gentlemen of the press, Invited guest, respected colleagues.*

Let me begin by welcoming you to this press conference, which was organized to provide information and updates on the next steps by women groups after the suspension of the daily protest at NASS by the Nigerian Women on the 5 gender bills.

As you will agree with me, the whole essence of constitution review process is to avail a golden opportunity for fundamental reforms in the nation's constitution to address pressing issues while putting the country on a path to stability and social justice. As such, the #nigerian WomenOccupyNass is a movement organized under auspices of WOMANIFESTO across national and sub-national level to ensure a coordinated response to the need for the passage of the 5 gender demands.

Recall that the National Assembly of recent voted against the five-amendment bills termed 'gender bills' purposed to address certain issue affecting women through the constitution using the window provided by the amendment to promote women's right in relation to indigeneship/citizenship, as well as political participation and inclusion.

Unfortunately, as a result of the outcomes of the votes on the proposed amendment, some issues that are critical to inclusion and gender equality were rejected. The said gender bills are as follow:

1. The bill on citizenship seeks to amend section 26 to grant citizenship to foreign husband of Nigerian women as is currently guaranteed in section 26(2)(a) for foreign wives of Nigerian men;

2. The indigeneship bill is to among other issues, address section 31 and 318(1) to allow women to claim their husbands' State of origin after at least five years of marriage;
3. The affirmative Action Bill is to specifically amend section 223 to ensure women occupy at least 35% in political party administration and appointive positions;
4. The bill on Ministerial or Commissioner Nomination is to among others, amend Sections 147 and 192 so that at least 35% of the nominees are women; while
5. The reserved seat bill is to among others, amend sections 48, 49 and 91 to create additional 37, 74, and 108 seats for women at the Senate, House of Representatives, and the State Assemblies respectively.

It is noteworthy that as part of efforts to ensure the smooth sail of the bills before it was killed by the National Assembly, the group identified and engaged allies, and also touched base with different women constituencies for their buy-in and support for the passage of the amendments. The first and the second ladies are firmly in support of our struggle and they both stood and still stand in solidarity with us. The Honourable Minister of Women Affairs also deployed her influence to mobilize women towards achieving this noble cause to mention a few.

The failure of these relevant amendments demonstrates the impaired state of our democracy. Our penchant for elected public officials having a final say even when the majority of Nigerians unanimously hold a contrary opinion on an issue, has continued to infantilise our democracy. Interestingly, issues advocating for the good of the people rarely see the light of day. The NASS has again demonstrated this anomaly in the last Constitutional Amendment process by rejecting the gender bills which not only affirm the rights of women as equal citizens, but also benefits all Nigerians.

We acknowledge the efforts of Nigerian Women in occupying the National Assembly for ten days, the tenacity which they have demonstrated has shown that women can no longer be taken for a ride,

and that we have decided to affirm our status as full citizens in this country and that our future cannot just be determined by few people who see us as lesser human beings. Our existence in this country is not negotiable, women have suffered historical injustices for years that have resulted in the disenfranchisement of half of the population, and the effects of these forms of injustices have been poor economic indicators, poor health systems, moribund institutions, political exclusions and marginalisation.

We with one voice reject the weighed citizenship of a country we all fought for its independence, contested indigeneship because we are performing our reproductive roles as women to give life to the country. Our ten days occupation is a testament to our strength and our resilience, it is the emergence of a national movement.

We recognise the recommittal of the three of the gender bills by the House of Representatives, it gives us hope for a better future, we also recognise their respect and honour for Nigerian Women by sending a delegation to us yesterday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March, led by the Principal officers, Hon Alhassan Ado Doguwa, Majority leader, we are determined to hold them accountable to their promises to ensure that within 7 legislative days, the gender bills are recommitted and positively voted for the inclusive growth and development of Nigeria.

We have the commitment of women groups across Nigeria to support lobbying and advocacy to ensure that we reach as many NASS members as possible.

We in particular commend the effort of young feminist activists whose activities on twitter and Instagram providing valuable information and mobilizing citizens to support via the hashtag that continually trended throughout the week with the reach of over 17.4 million on twitter alone.

We particularly commend the media for being a strategic partner in this struggle. The media was instrumental in ensuring visibility for movement, publicising the women's demands and setting the agenda.

We can categorically say that the events in the last few weeks have played an important role in spotlighting these demands and

demonstrated women's optimism, motivation and resilience in leading positive changes through their dogged insistence.

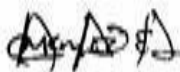
We also urge all Nigerians, especially its women, not to give up hope as we shall continue to apply pressure to persuade the NASS to act responsibly. We will continue to engage the media and state assemblies to vote in favour of the gender bill.

While we await NASS to live to its billing by reversing itself, we urge all citizens who want to see change to prepare to continue to stand against every form of injustice and contribute to the emergence of laws that will address the fundamental issues affecting all citizens.

**Our Demands are**

1. Urgent re-convening, reconsideration, and immediate passage of the all women/gender-related bills by the National Assembly.
2. The passage of the Gender and Equal Opportunities (GEOB) Bill, currently before the Senate.
3. Resuscitation and passage of the Bill on "Support for Women Participation in Elective and Appointive positions"
4. Immediate Domestication of the African Charters Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, which Nigeria ratified in 2004.
5. Immediate domestication of the UN Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), ratified by Nigeria since 1985.
6. As our representatives, we demand to know your voting pattern on sensitive matters of citizen rights.
7. All the bills be passed by March 31st 2022 to gloriously end the women's month

**Signed:**



**Dr Abiola Akiyode-Afolabi**

For:

9jafeminista

Abiodun Essiet Initiative for Girls

Above Whispers Foundation

Action Aid Nigeria  
ACTS Generation GBV  
Ade Grange Child Foundation  
ADEM Community Human Development Foundation  
Adinya Arise Foundation (AAF)  
Advocate for Health and Development Initiative  
African Women's Initiative (AWI)  
Ajegunle Community Project  
Ajoke Ayisat Afolabi Foundation  
Alliances for Africa (AfA)  
Amazing Grace Inspirations  
Aminchi Women Cooperative Society  
Amnesty International Nigeria  
ARDA Development Communication Inc.  
Arise Nigerian Woman Foundation.  
ASWHAN  
ATATA Development and Empowerment Foundation (ADEF)  
BLECCA Foundation  
Bring Back Our Girls  
Briskila Emefesi Women Foundation (BEWOF)  
Baobab for Women's Human Rights  
Cece Yara Foundation  
Cedar Seed Foundation  
CEE-HOPE Nigeria  
Center for Economic Empowerment and Gender Activities (CEEGA)  
Centre for Alternative Development and Self-Enhancement (CEADESE NG)  
Centre for Health and Development in Africa (CHEDA)  
Centre for Nonviolence and Gender Advocacy in Nigeria (CENGAIN)  
Centre for Peace Education and Community Development  
Centre for Women's Health and Information (CEWHIN)  
Change Managers International Network  
Charity Women Spring of Salvation  
Chedal Multi-Purpose Cooperative Society  
Child Care and Adult Protection Initiative (CCAPI)  
Choung-Dung Women Association.  
Christian Women for Excellence and Empowerment in Nigerian Society (CWEENS)  
Christian Women in Nigerian Politics  
Citizens Center for Integrated Development and Social Rights (CCIDESOR)  
Community and Youth Development  
Community Education Advancement of Peace and Development Initiative (CEAPDI)  
Community Initiative for Healthy and Peaceful Society  
Community Life Project (CLP)  
Community Rescue Initiative (CRI)  
Community Women Initiatives (CWI)  
Country Associates Network (CAN)  
Courageous People Health and Development Initiative (CPHDL)  
Crestville Development Foundation (CDF)  
Daria Media Foundation (DMF)  
Development in Practice Gender and Entrepreneurial Initiative (DIPGEI)  
Diaspora Womanifesto2019  
Dinidari Foundation (DF)  
Dorothy Njemanze Foundation (DNF)  
Dream Alive Women and Orphans Support Foundation (DAWOS Foundation)  
Echoes of Women in Africa Initiatives  
Edo Women's Development Initiative  
Education As A Vaccine (EVA)  
EiE Nigeria

Emerge Women (EW)  
 Empowerment and Action Research Centre (EARC)  
 Equality Through Education Foundation (ETEF)  
 Equity Advocates/ The Woman Today Newspaper  
 FACICP Disability Plus  
 FAME Foundation  
 Federation of Informal Workers of Nigeria (FIWON)  
 Federation of Muslim Women Association in Nigeria (FOMWAN)  
 Federation of Paralegal Network (FEDPAN)  
 Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA)  
 Fembridge Development Initiative (FEDI)  
 FIDA Nigeria  
 First Future Leadership  
 FOMWAN  
 Forward in Action for Education, Poverty and Malnutrition (FACE-PAM)  
 FRED  
 Gender Action Awareness Trust  
 Gender and Constitution Reform Network (GECORN)  
 Gender and Development Action (GADA)  
 Gender and Environmental Risk Reduction Initiative (GERI)  
 Gender Awareness Trust (GAT)  
 Gender Development Initiative  
 Gender Equality Center  
 Gender Equality, Peace and Development Centre  
 Gender Technical Unit (GTU)  
 Girl Child Advocacy and Education Initiatives  
 Girl Child Africa  
 Girl Child Education, Care & Rehabilitation  
 Girl Education Rehabilitation and Care (GERAC)  
 Girls Power Initiative (GPI)  
 Global Hope for Women and Children Foundation (GLOHWOC)  
 Green Spring Development Initiative  
 Habiba Dangana (Hadis) Foundation  
 Heal Disability Initiative  
 Health Education and Human Rights Advocacy Initiative  
 Health Reform Foundation Of Nigeria (HERFON)  
 HEIR Women Development (HWD)  
 Help Initiative for Social Justice & Humanitarian Development  
 Hope for New Life (HNL)  
 Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD)  
 Inter Africa Committee (IAC)  
 Inter Gender Peace Foundation (IGPF)  
 International Action Network on Small Arms Women Network (IANSA)  
 International Federation of Women Lawyers (Fida Nigeria)  
 International Hairstylists, Barber and Body Therapists (IHSTOBAN)  
 International Society of Media in Public Health (ISMPPH)  
 International Women Communication Centre (IRIAD)  
 Iyanwura Children Care Foundation (ICCF)  
 Jamatul Nasir Islam, Women Wing  
 Jana Health Foundation (JHF)  
 Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies  
 Foundation for Justice Development and Peace (FJDP)  
 Justice Development and Peace Mission (JDPM)  
 KMashi Gamji Women  
 Kebetkache Women Development And Resources Centre  
 Kimpact Initiatives (KI)  
 Kudirat Initiative for Democracy (KIND)

Kungiyar Tallafin Mata Development Initiative (KTMDI)  
 League of Queens International Empowerment (LQIE)  
 League of Women Voters of Nigeria (NILOWV)  
 LEDAP  
 Lift Initiative  
 MBULA Women Association  
 Media &Teens Network.  
 Media Concern Initiative  
 MODAC  
 Mojubaolu Olufunke Okome  
 More Women in Politics  
 My Voice My Future NGO  
 Nasrul – Lahi-L- Faith Society (NASFAT)  
 Nigerian Association of Women Journalist (NAWOJ)  
 National Centre for Women Development  
 National Council of Women Societies (NCWS)  
 NECA’s Network of Entrepreneurial Women  
 Neighbourhood Care-Well Foundation  
 Network of Reproductive Health Journalists of Nigeria, NRHJN  
 Next Initiative for Gender Actions (NIGA)  
 NGAS Women Farmers’ Cooperative Society  
 Nigeria Association of Women Journalist (NAWOJ)  
 Nigeria For Women Project  
 Nigeria Labour Congress, Women Committee  
 Nigerian Express  
 Nigerian Women Politics Forum  
 Nigerian Women Trust Fund (NTWF)  
 Ogayem Merciful Care and Support Initiatives (OMCSI)  
 Ogun Women Alive  
 Olive Community Development Initiatives  
 Onomese Foundation  
 Open Arms Initiative for Sustainable Development (OPAISD)  
 Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA)  
 Osi Joe Touching Lives Initiative  
 Ovie Brume Foundation  
 Partners West Africa  
 Peasant Dragnet  
 Proactive Gender Initiative (PGI)  
 Project Alert on Violence Against Women  
 Ray of Hope Community Foundation  
 Relief Development Initiative Kaduna  
 Responsible Citizenship and Human Development Initiative  
 Sesor Empowerment Foundation  
 She Forum Africa  
 Sheforshe Africa Initiative  
 Shout Global Health  
 Small-scale Women Farmers Organization of Nigeria (SWOFON)  
 South- South Professional Women Association.  
 Stand to End Rape (STER)  
 Stephanie Peace Building Development Foundation  
 Support For Needy Children And Women Initiative (SUNCHI)  
 TechHerNG  
 The Inclusion Project (TIP)  
 The Priceless Jewels Foundation  
 THR Media - HERFESSIONS INITIATIVE  
 Tonia Bruised but Not Broken Foundation  
 Transformation and Development Center (TDC)

Transition Monitoring Group  
 Tunde & Friends Foundation (TAFF)  
 UC Women Commission  
 UN Women  
 Vision Spring Initiatives (VSI)  
 Voice of Ogun Women (VOW)  
 West African Network for Peace  
 Widows Development Organization (WIDO)  
 Woman-Being Concern Nigeria (WBC)  
 Women's Leadership Group (WLG)  
 Women & Youth Awareness Empowerment Network (WOYAEN)  
 Women Advocacy, HIV Prevention and Other Diseases (WAHPOD)  
 Women Advocates Research and Documentation Center (WARDC)  
 Women Aid Collective (WACOL)  
 Women and Youth Empowerment for Advancement and Health Initiative  
 Women Youth and Children Upliftment Foundation (WYCUT)  
 Women Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON)  
 Women education advocacy and development Initiatives (WEADI)  
 Women Empowerment and Initiative Development  
 Women Empowerment and Reproductive Health Centre (WERHC)  
 Women Empowerment Education and Peace Building Initiative (WEPBI)  
 Women Environmental Programme (WEP)  
 Women Farmers Alliance (WFA)  
 Women for Peace and Gender Equality Initiative (WOPEGEE)  
 Women for Women International (W4WI)  
 Women Foundation Initiative (WFI)  
 Women Foundation of Nigeria (WFN)  
 Women in Action for Positive Development and Gender Enhancement Center (WAPGADEC)  
 Former Women Action Organization (WAO)  
 Women in Africa Initiative (WIAI)  
 Women in Agriculture (WIA)  
 Women in Mining (WIM)  
 Women in Politics Forum (WiPF)  
 Women Information Network (WINET)  
 Women Initiative for Democracy and Empowerment (WIDE)  
 Women Law and Development Initiative (WOLDI)  
 Women Law Development Center of Nigeria (WLDCN)  
 Women Lead Agric (WLA)  
 Women League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)  
 Women of Vision Development Initiative  
 Women Protection Organization (WOPO)  
 Women Wing of The Christian Association of Nigeria (WOWICAN)  
 Women, Infants and Children Care Initiative (WICCI)  
 Women, Youths and Children Advancement Program  
 Women Aid Collective (WACOL)  
 Women Optimum Development Foundation-WODEF  
 Women Right to Education Programme (WREP)  
 Women's Crisis Centre Owerri  
 Women's Rights and Health Project  
 Women's Rights and Health Project (WRAHP)  
 Working Moms Africa (WMA)  
 Wumi Asubiaro Dada  
 Victoria Sylvester  
 Youth Future Savers Initiative (YFSI)  
 Zonta International Club of Lagos 1