ACTION GROUP ON FREE CIVIC SPACE

LIKE AGBA JALINGO, LIKE THE REST OF US

21st March 2022

PRESS STATEMENT

For the civil society in Nigeria, today 21st March 2022, represents on one hand, a day of immense relief and victory and on the other hand, a day of deep introspection.

After 179 days of incarceration, a Federal High Court in Calabar has dismissed the terrorism, treasonable felony and cybercrime charges against Agba Jalingo.

For three years, Agba Jalingo, the publisher of an online newspaper, *CrossRiverWatch* has been a victim of the draconian measures targeted at civil society actors and the intolerance of state actors in Nigeria to dissent in the civic space.

Jalingo who was arrested in 2019 for accusing the Cross River State Governor of diverting N500 million belonging to the state is just one example out of many Nigerians whose freedoms have been curtailed for daring to point out the anomalies in the government and its operations.

As we join Agba Jalingo and the good people of Cross River and Nigeria at large to celebrate this symbolic victory, we must not fail to interrogate the strange sequence of circumstances that have led us to where we are today. The impropriety of arresting a journalist for doing his job, and not just so, charging him with terrorism, treasonable felony and cybercrime without actionable evidence is something that should worry every well-meaning Nigerian. Are we all then, potential terrorists?

In the same vein, we commend the courageous stand of the judiciary for the common man. As Nigeria aspires towards democratic consolidation, it is heartwarming and reassuring to know that the Judiciary is indeed the last hope of the common man.

The Action Group on Free Civic Space congratulates Agba Jalingo on his long overdue release and call on the federal and state government actors to halt the clampdown on the civil liberties of citizens and end the repression on constitutionally guaranteed freedoms of Nigerians.

Sefa Ikpa
08145000073
For AGFCS