



University Media Centre,
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09097748417

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PRESS RELEASE

IFC CONDEMNS CONFERMENT OF PATRON STATUS ON SENATOR ELISHA ABBO BY ACTORS GUILD OF NIGERIA

We at Ibadan Film Circle (IFC), a gathering of professional filmmakers, culture activists, scholars and art enthusiasts, hereby unequivocally condemn the recent appointment of a proven perpetrator of gender-based violence, Senator Elisha Cliff Abbo, as a 'Patron' of the Actors Guild of Nigeria (AGN).

As informed stakeholders in the Nigerian film industry, we insist that the Actors Guild of Nigeria should strive to maintain its reputation as a respectable body of professionals and role models and should not engage in such petty and pedestrian pursuits as trying to whitewash the public image of a person like Mr Elisha Cliff Abbo, whose crudity is unbecoming of any peace-loving member of the society, more so, an elected Senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria who was caught on video viciously attacking a woman in an adult sex shop in Abuja in 2019.

We at IFC believe that it is shameful enough that Senator Elisha Cliff Abbo seems not only to have gotten away with his despicable act, but has also been arrogantly unremorseful about it. Against this background, we find that the AGN's decision to honour him as a Patron is grossly insensitive and even immoral. We believe that there are many upright and emotionally stable members of the society who can be found fit for this revered position. It is an affront on decency for Senator Elisha Cliff Abbo, a woman beater, to now strut as a 'Patron' of AGN, a body of artists who are role models and by recognition of this fact, brand ambassadors to some corporate bodies and developmental agencies.

We see clearly through the spirited effort of Mr Jimi Lot, the Chairman of AGN Adamawa State chapter, to defend the misplaced honor that his Guild has bestowed on Senator Abbo. It is disheartening to hear Mr Lot implying that the association he heads could not recognize, not to talk of rejecting, such obvious Greek gifts of 'assistance' from such tainted sources as a disgraced Senator seeking to bribe his way back into public goodwill.

We hereby call on the national executive council of the Actors Guild of Nigeria to immediately withdraw the unmerited honor that the Guild has bestowed on Senator Elisha Cliff Abbo. We also call on all chapters of AGN at state and local government levels to prevail on the national council to rescind this ill-thought decision that stands to only tarnish the good name that the Guild has built over the years in the Nigerian social imaginary. Finally, we appeal to all stakeholders in the Nigerian film, theatre and media practices as well as the general public to clamor for an erasure of this 'honor', which a social misfit has obviously used his deep pockets to purchase from an unreflecting group of men and women in AGN. All these, we at IFC believe, should be done if only to send a clear message that acts of violence and abuse against women should not be applauded or rewarded in whatever form of disguise. We commend specially, the few female members of AGN who have raised their voices against this move and enjoin more to speak up. We challenge all well meaning Nigerians to also speak up against this trend.

To let Senator Elisha Cliff Abbo remain a patron of the Actors Guild of Nigeria is to applaud and reward him for being a high-flying exponent of gender based violence. This is wrong. And wrong.



Ropo Ewenla
Administrator, Ibadan Film Circle.