

9 January 2018

Nigeria: Judicial harassment of human rights defender Ibrahim Garba Wala

On 5 January 2018, human rights defender **Ibrahim Garba Wala** was arrested by police officers following a hearing in the High Court of Maitama District in Abuja, Nigeria.

[Ibrahim Garba Wala](#) (popularly known as IG Wala) is the National Coordinator for **Citizens Action to Take Back Nigeria – CATBAN** which is a human rights, anti-corruption and pro-democracy platform. CATBAN has led various campaigns and peaceful movements to promote human rights and the rule of law while documenting human rights violations resulting from practices of impunity and corruption by state actors. Ibrahim Garba Wala has submitted a number of petitions to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) detailing corruption in several organisations, specifically highlighting extortion by members of the National Hajj Commission, which is a public body tasked with licensing, regulating, performing oversight, and undertaking supervisory functions over agencies and other bodies.

On 4 January 2018, Ibrahim Garba Wala was invited by police officers to the police station with his lawyer to give a statement on a criminal matter that had been lodged against him. A member of the National Hajj Commission had previously submitted a civil defamation complaint against the human rights defender to Apo High Court in Abuja.

On 5 January 2018, the human rights defender was arrested by police officers and detained under the authority of the Inspector General of Police while in the court house following a hearing on the criminal matter against him.

On 8 January 2018 a court hearing was held where charges of intimidation, threat to life and defamation of character were issued against him. The police was granted a court order for additional time to investigate the case.

This criminal case follows an on-going civil matter based on the same accusations, with the two cases now running concurrently. On 5 December 2017, the civil matter came up for hearing in court but was subsequently adjourned to 20 February 2018, when the plaintiff and his representative failed to appear in court. The judge granted an adjournment as the complainant's lawyer was not yet prepared for the case.

In a press release from 5 January 2018, CATBAN maintains that the police acted on a petition by a member of the National Hajj Commission to deter the human rights defender from continuing his efforts to expose corruption.

Front Line Defenders condemns the judicial harassment and detention based on false charges of Ibrahim Garba Wala, as it believes he has been targeted for his legitimate work in human rights and exposing corruption practices in Nigeria.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Nigeria to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Ibrahim Garba Wala as Front Line Defenders believes that he is being held solely as a result of his legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
2. Immediately drop all charges against Ibrahim Garba Wala;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that human rights defenders in Nigeria are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions including judicial harassment.