

REPORT ON ADVOCACY VISIT TO HISBAH TO DECRIMINALIZE PETTY OFFENCE



Objective

1. Establish a working relationship with the Hisbah board towards the decriminalization of petty offences in Kano State.
2. Advocate against the criminalization of petty offences and poverty status in the state
3. Advocate for a human rights approach in the conduct of cases by the Board.



Fig 1: Mrs. Nurudeen and CSO Nafiu

Background

Lawyers Alert with the support of the Open Society Initiative of West Africa (OSIWA) is implementing a project that seeks to deepen efforts at decriminalization of Petty offences in Nigeria, facilitate synergy in advocacy efforts to decriminalize Petty offences, and to provide legal representation to persons accused of Petty Offenses.

On the 23rd of March, 2023, Lawyers Alert's partner in Kano Mrs. Nurudeen Shehu paid a courtesy visit to Hisbah Kano to advocate for the decriminalization of petty offenses in the state. This report aims to provide an overview of the advocacy visit to Hisbah and its outcomes.

The advocacy visits to Hisbah aimed to discuss the decriminalization of petty offenses. The Partner argued that the current system of punishing petty offenses is not effective and leads to the criminalization of poverty. They emphasized that Petty offenses are minor crimes that are usually punishable by a fine or a short period of imprisonment. However, the consequences of being convicted of a petty offense can have a significant impact on an individual's life, including their ability to obtain employment, housing, and education.

The delegation stated the enforcement of petty offenses disproportionately affects marginalized communities, such as low-income and minority groups. The delegation emphasized that the decriminalization of petty offences will lead to more equitable outcomes for all members of society.

One of the key issues presented by Mrs. Nurudeen Shehu was that the criminalization of petty offenses is not an effective way to deter crime. Stating

that studies have shown that the threat of punishment is not a significant factor in deterring individuals from committing petty offenses. Instead, that education and support services are more effective in preventing individuals from committing petty offenses in the first place.

It was further emphasized that the current system of punishment for petty offenses is overly punitive and does not take into account the individual circumstances of the offender. She also emphasized that the enforcement of petty offenses leads to the over-criminalization of marginalized communities and that the decriminalization of petty offenses would free up resources for law enforcement agencies to focus on more serious crimes. It was also stated that the decriminalization of petty offenses would reduce the burden on the criminal justice system and lead to more efficient outcomes.

The delegation emphasized that the decriminalization of petty offenses would have positive social and economic outcomes. By reducing the number of individuals who are in the criminal justice system, the decriminalization of petty offenses would lead to savings in government resources. Additionally, the decriminalization of petty offenses would reduce the stigma associated with a criminal record, which would improve the employment prospects and social mobility of individuals who have been convicted of a petty offense.

The OC/CID Chief Superintendent Intelligent Officer Sulaiman Abba Isa and Chief Superintendent Operations of Hisbah Mrs. Nafiu expressed willingness to consider the issues raised and agreed to further discussions on the matter. The officials acknowledged that the current system of punishment for petty offenses is not effective and leads to the over-criminalization of marginalized communities. They also acknowledged that the decriminalization of petty offenses would lead to more equitable outcomes for all members of society.



Fig 2: Mrs. Nurudeen and CID Sulaiman Abba Isa.

The officials agreed to further discussions with the partners and to consider the evidence and arguments presented. They also expressed a willingness to work with civil society organizations to develop alternative approaches to addressing petty offenses. The officials emphasized that any changes to the current system of punishment for petty offenses would need to be carefully considered and would require the support of law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, and other stakeholders.

The advocacy visit to Hisbah was an important step in Lawyers Alert ongoing efforts to decriminalize petty offenses. The current system of punishment for petty offenses is not effective and leads to the over-criminalization of marginalized communities. On the next steps, officials at Hisbah expressed willingness to consider the issue and agreed to further discussions on the matter. The decriminalization of petty offenses would lead to more equitable outcomes for all members of society and would have positive social and economic outcomes.

The logo features the letters 'LA' in a large, bold, gold-colored font. Below the 'LA', the words 'LAWYERS ALERT' are written in a smaller, grey, sans-serif font, slanted upwards from left to right.
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