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14<sup>th</sup> May, 2019

**Lauretta Onochie,**  
**Special Assistant to the President on Social Media,**  
**Presidential Villa,**  
**Aso Rock, FCT,**  
**Abuja.**

Dear Madam,

## **DEMAND FOR APOLOGY, RETRACTION AND PAYMENT OF DAMAGES FOR YOUR DEFAMATORY STATEMENT/PUBLICATION AGAINST AND CONCERNING THE PERSON OF HIS EXCELLENCY, ATIKU ABUBAKAR (GCON)**

1.0

### **INTRODUCTION**

1.1 We are Solicitors to His Excellency, Atiku Abubakar, (GCON) hereinafter referred to as **"our client"**, on whose firm instructions and clear mandate we write this letter to you.

2.0

### **BACKGROUND FACTS**

2.1 The attention of our client has been drawn to a very vile and denigrating publication with the caption, "Atiku On UAE Watchlist - Security Sources", made available to the whole world on your twitter handle page at:

[https://twitter.com/Laurestar?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor](https://twitter.com/Laurestar?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor).

2.2 The said defamatory publication against our client was made by you on **7<sup>th</sup> May, 2019**. In the said publication,

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you, amongst other baseless allegations, falsely and maliciously accused our client of being on the watch list of **Security Operatives in the United Arab Emirates (UAE)**. You further falsely accused our client of shopping for terrorists in the Middle East, thereby portraying him as an evil man, mentor of terrorists, someone who has links with terrorists, and a person who is interested in destabilizing the peace and unity of Nigeria. Your publication also portrayed our client as a security threat and terrorist to right thinking members of the public and the society at large. These baseless allegations which originated from you vide your tweet on **the 7<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2019**, was published by several newspapers nationwide and on several social media news blogs such as **the Cable** (available on <https://www.thecable.ng/fact-check-is-atiku-on-uae-watch-list>), **the Wordpress.com.ng** (available on <https://swordpress.com.ng/2019/05/10/buharis-aide-lauretta-onochie-accuses-atiku-of-shopping-for-terrorists-in-uae/>), et al.

- 2.3 Your vile, baseless and concocted statement released on your twitter handle page and also published globally online in the social and other print media quoted you as follows:

**“Atiku on UAE watchlist- Security sources Security operatives in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are keeping a close tab on a former Nigerian Vice Pres Atiku Abubakar who has been in the Middle East nation for several weeks now What is he doing there? Me: Shopping for Terrorists?”**





3.0

### OUR CLIENT'S POSITION

- 3.1 Our client categorically denies each and every allegation contained in the said publication which is a figment of your imagination. Our client states most emphatically that the entire opprobrious and denigrating story above referred to is most misleading, baseless, false, malicious and totally bereft of any foundation howsoever. We hereby state most emphatically that the inference and grave conclusions made by you in the obviously politically orchestrated story were invented by you and others of your ilk solely to cause maximum damage to the high reputation of our client, who is currently before the Election Petition Tribunal against your employer and boss, President Muhammadu Buhari, challenging the latter's purported victory in the last presidential election.
- 3.2 Contrary to your derogatory, disparaging, mendacious and unrestrained defamatory statement, as published in various print, electronic and online media platforms, of and concerning our client, our client is not and has never been on the watch list of the UAE, or any other country, for that matter. He has neither ever been denied entry into, interrogated, nor been declared wanted by the UAE Authorities, or any of its security agencies.
- 3.3 It is quite revealing that even as we write this letter, our client is presently in the UAE and has not been accosted by any security agencies over the said frivolous and baseless allegations.
- 3.4 **To say our client is shopping for terrorists is not only dishonest and reckless, but is calculated and**





**politically designed to instigate security agents against him not only in the UAE, but across the world.**

#### 4.0 **EFFECT OF YOUR FALSE PUBLICATION**

4.1 Your odious publication is clearly also aimed at rubbing out our client's image and reputation. It has caused him national and international backlash and embarrassment and done incalculable damage to him. Your publication has also caused our client, in the eyes of reasonable members of the public, unspeakable odium, obloquy, hatred, ridicule and psychological trauma. He has thereby been subjected to the shame and infamy of being viewed by members of the public as not only corrupt, but as a terrorist and sponsor of terrorism. Numerous telephone calls, emails, visits, letters and private social media chats by his family members, friends, political and business associates, and international statesmen and women in the last few days attest to the alarm and serious concerns generated by your false publication.

#### 5.0 **RETRACTION, APOLOGY AND DAMAGES**

5.1 Consequently, we have our client's instructions to demand and we hereby demand from you, the following:

1. That you publish and tender a written retraction of and apology for, the said libelous publication in six national dailies circulating in Nigeria and one international daily, as well as on all the social media platforms, wherein the said publication was made.



2. That you pay to our client through this firm, the sum of **500,000,000.00 (Five hundred million naira)** only, representing minimal damages to assuage his already battered image wholly caused by your said defamatory publication.

6.0

## CONCLUSION

- 6.1 **TAKE NOTICE** that if you fail, refuse and/or neglect to accede to our above modest demands within the next 48 hours from the date of this letter, we shall be compelled to activate the full weight of the legal machinery against you, without any further recourse to you. We shall, in such a suit, be claiming against you, the sum of **N2 Billion Naira**, representing exemplary, aggravated and punitive damages. This shall be in addition to our demands in the paragraphs above.
- 6.2 **FURTHER TAKE NOTICE** that in the event that there occurs any further malicious and libelous publication against our client, we shall be compelled to pursue a criminal charge against you. We earnestly advise you to advise yourself appropriately. A stitch in times saves nine. To say more will be otiose.
- 6.3 Thank you



Yours faithfully,

**Chief Mike A.A. Ozekhome, SAN, OFR, FCI Arb, Ph.D, LL.D**  
**Chief Counsel/Head of Chambers**