Dagogo insist Tinubu’s actions in Rivers constitutes rape of democracy

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The last is yet to be heard of the controversy surrounding the emergency rule declaration in Rivers State as Dr. Farah Dagogo, a former Member of the House of Representatives, described the suspension of elected officials in Rivers State by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu as a rape of democracy and a clear violation of the Nigerian Constitution.  
  
Speaking through his legal counsel at a Federal High Court sitting in Abuja on Wednesday, Dr. Dagogo reaffirmed that the President’s actions of March 18, 2025 which included the imposition of a State of Emergency in Rivers State and the subsequent suspension of Governor Siminalayi Fubara, Deputy Governor Professor Ngozi Odu, and all 32 members of the State House of Assembly were unconstitutional and unlawful.  
  
The President’s decision, which was ratified by both chambers of the National Assembly two days later, led to the temporary removal of the entire elected leadership of the state for an initial six-month suspension.  
  
In their place, President Tinubu appointed Vice Admiral Ibok-Ete Ibas (Rtd.) as Administrator of Rivers State a move that has attracted widespread criticism from civil society and constitutional scholars.  
  
During Wednesday’s proceedings at the Federal High Court, only the first and fifth respondents, represented by Prof. Kanyinsola Ajayi, SAN, and Abduljabar Aliyu, respectively, were present in court. The third and fourth respondents, the Nigerian Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, respectively, were once again absent, continuing a trend of non-appearance in the matter.  
  
Presiding over the case, Justice James Omotosho clarified from the bench that, contrary to speculation circulating on social media, the court remains committed to deciding the matter on its legal merits. The judge further directed that hearing notices be reissued to the absent third and fourth respondents to ensure proper representation at the next sitting.  
  
The matter has been adjourned to October 7, 2025, following the commencement of the court’s annual vacation.  
  
Addressing journalists after the hearing, Barrister Babafemi Adegbite, a member of Dr. Dagogo’s legal team, reiterated the constitutional gravity of the matter and their commitment to pursuing justice through legal means.  
  
“This suit was initially filed at the Federal High Court in Port Harcourt, but it was later transferred to Abuja under circumstances we will address at the appropriate time. What is most important is that we are determined to ventilate our client’s constitutional grievances before the court and obtain judgement based on law and democratic principle,” said Adegbite.  
  
“Our contention is that the President acted ultra vires the Constitution by suspending a democratically elected government and appointing an unelected Administrator. This was further endorsed by the National Assembly, which, rather than act as a check, became complicit in undermining democratic governance. This is a grave constitutional matter, and we are resolute in pursuing it to its logical conclusion for the sake of democratic integrity and posterity,” Barr. Babafemi added.