Group demands evidence from Akpoti over allegations against Akpabio

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A civil society organisation, Women for Change Vanguard, has called on Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan to provide concrete evidence to back her allegations of sexual harassment against the President of the 10th Senate, Senator Godswill Akpabio.  
  
The group, led by Mrs. Irene Imoh, staged a peaceful protest at the United Nations House in Abuja on Friday, expressing concern over what they described as the damage caused by unsubstantiated allegations against public figures.  
  
Addressing the press, Mrs. Imoh stated that while accountability is critical in cases of sexual harassment, allegations must be thoroughly scrutinised to prevent misuse of such claims.  
  
“We gather here today at the esteemed UN House to express our support for His Excellency, the President of the 10th Senate, Senator Godswill Obong Akpabio. Over the past few weeks, he has faced significant reputational damage due to unsubstantiated allegations of sexual harassment made by his colleague, Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan.”  
  
She emphasised the importance of providing evidence when making such serious accusations, noting that the burden of proof lies with the accuser.  
  
“It is important to remember that in any allegation of misconduct, the burden of proof lies with the accuser. If Senator Natasha claims to have been a victim of sexual harassment, we urge her to come forth with credible evidence to support her accusations. The gravity of such claims demands accountability.”  
  
The group also warned against the potential misuse of sexual harassment allegations, expressing concerns about the #BelieveAllWomen movement being applied without due process.  
  
“We are particularly troubled by the growing trend of misusing the #BelieveAllWomen mantra, which can inadvertently shield unfounded accusations against men. This is not the first time Senator Natasha has made serious allegations against a prominent figure. Such actions risk becoming a weapon she wields against men in power, undermining the core principles of our fight against sexual violence.”  
  
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The Women for Change Vanguard stressed that false or unverified accusations not only harm the accused but also weaken the credibility of real victims of sexual abuse.  
  
“As mothers and members of the Women for Change Vanguard, we are acutely aware of the implications of false accusations. Such claims not only harm the accused but also diminish the experiences of genuine survivors. We call on Senator Natasha to provide concrete evidence of her claims against Senator Godswill Akpabio. Should credible evidence be presented, we will stand firm in our commitment to ensuring that justice is served.”  
  
The group further stated that their protest was not just about supporting Akpabio but about ensuring that both parties are held accountable.  
  
“Our peaceful protest today is not merely about demanding justice, it is also about holding both parties accountable. Senator Akpabio must have the opportunity to clear his name, while Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan must evidence that she was sexually abused.”  
  
Mrs. Umoh concluded by encouraging women to be strong and resilient, particularly in professional spaces.  
  
“As women, we must not be perceived as weak. Instead, we must embody strength and resilience, particularly in the workplace and beyond.”  
  
Chanting solidarity songs, the carried placards with inscriptions, such as, “We believe in actual victims of sexual harassment not people who weaponise it’, ‘The burden of proof lies with the accuser”, the demonstrators noted that the allegations made by Natasha against Akpabio raise serious concerns that necessitate thorough scrutiny.  
  
The protesters who submitted a petition to the UN were received by the UN Senior Human Rights Advisor, Adwoa Kufuor, who promised to channel their grievances to senior UN officials.