Civil society petitions UN over Natasha’s sexual assault allegations

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The National Civil Society Council of Nigeria has written to the United Nations through the Office of the Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Nigeria over the lingering crisis in the Nigerian Senate following allegations of sexual assault levelled against Senate President Godswill Akpabio by Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan.  
  
Akpoti-Uduaghan, who is serving a six-month suspension, had accused Akpabio of sexual harassment and abuse of power.  
  
Last week, she took her complaint to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a United Nations agency, alleging bias by the Nigerian Senate and its leadership.  
  
However, in a letter dated March 18, 2025, and signed by the Executive Director of the council, Blessing Akinlosotu, the body stressed the need to uphold the sanctity of the Senate as a symbol of democracy and national sovereignty.  
  
Akinlosotu called for a fair and objective assessment of the issue, stating that Senator Natasha’s suspension was based on her conduct within the chamber rather than her allegations against Akpabio.  
  
“Specific reasons cited for her suspension include refusal to sit in her assigned seat. The Senate observed that Senator Akpoti-Uduaghan reportedly declined to occupy her designated seat in the chamber, which was considered a breach of protocol.  
  
“The rearrangement of seating was necessitated by the recent decampment of some senators to the majority party (APC). She was also accused of addressing the Senate without obtaining prior recognition from the presiding officer, thereby violating established procedures,” the letter stated.  
  
Akinlosotu added that these actions violated Sections 6.1 and 6.2 of the 2023 Standing Orders of the Nigerian Senate.  
  
“We urge a balanced approach to avoid a situation where such allegations are weaponised for personal or political gains. Hence, we condemn any attempt by any person or group to spread wrong narratives for whatever reasons.  
  
We firmly believe that sensitive accusations such as sexual assault must be supported by strong, credible evidence before being made public to avoid sensational reportage, especially when they concern individuals in positions of authority,” the letter added.