



PROTECTION
INTERNATIONAL



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**Joint Statement-Nigeria: A public call to withdraw the Foreign Aids Bill 2026 (SB. 1034)
which could restrict civic space and undermine human rights defenders' work**

The Nigerian Human Rights Defenders Network (NHRDN), Partnership for Justice, Front Line Defenders (FLD), West African Human Rights Defenders Network and Protection International jointly reject the Foreign Aids (Regulation, Transparency and Disclosure) Bill, 2026 (SB. 1034), sponsored by Senator Ibrahim Hassan Dankwambo (PDP, Gombe North) in May 2026. The Bill, which has already passed its second reading in the Senate on July 2026, seeks to establish a Foreign Aid Regulatory Commission (FARC) with powers to register, inspect, audit, sanction, and suspend or shut down organisations that receive foreign grants, donations, or technical assistance, including independent civic actors, human rights defenders, legal aid providers, and humanitarian organisations across Nigeria.

This Bill directly contradicts Nigeria's formally accepted recommendations from its 4th Universal Periodic Review (UPR) cycle, which committed the State to guarantee a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders and civil society organizations, and to protect the rights to freedom of association, assembly, and expression.

We note that this Bill also comes as Nigeria is a candidate for election to the UN Human Rights Council for the 2027-2029 term, a candidacy that should be matched by concrete domestic protection of human rights defenders.

If enacted, SB. 1034 would have direct and severe consequences for the protection of human rights defenders in Nigeria and undermine essential protection services across the nation, specifically:

Section 6 (1) requires registration of any foreign aid within 30 days of receipt. For rapid-response humanitarian grants, legal defense funds, emergency relocation support, and urgent assistance to survivors of human rights violations and gender-based violence, this rigid paperwork deadline risks criminalizing life-saving, time-sensitive protection support for defenders at risk.

2. Sections 7 and 8 require public disclosure of implementing partners and funded activities in a nationally accessible register. For human rights defenders, and particularly for survivors, witnesses, and individuals engaged in politically sensitive documentation work, such mandatory public exposure creates serious and foreseeable security risks, including surveillance, harassment, and retaliation.

3. Section 11 requires foreign-funded activity to “align” with Nigeria's national development plans and priorities. This standard is broad and vague enough that the State could brand the work of human rights defenders, including those documenting rights violations, defending land and environmental

rights, or supporting marginalized and at-risk communities, as “out of alignment or priorities”, providing a legal basis to restrict their protection support.

4. We further note that the Commission's proposed (FARC) functions substantially duplicate those of existing bodies, including the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC), the Special Control Unit Against Money Laundering (SCUML), the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), and the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU).

We therefore jointly call on the Senate, its leadership, and the Federal Government of Nigeria to:

1. Immediately withdraw the Foreign Aids (Regulation, Transparency and Disclosure) Bill, 2026 (SB. 1034);
2. Ensure that any future legislation affecting civic space and foreign funding strictly aligns with Nigeria's Constitution, the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, and its international human rights obligations, and involves structured, meaningful consultation with human rights defenders and civil society;
3. Guarantee explicit legal protections for the confidentiality of information relating to human rights defenders, survivors, witnesses, and other at-risk individuals supported through foreign funding, including exemption from public disclosure requirements where such disclosure would endanger their safety;
4. Establish a differentiated, expedited procedure for emergency and protection-related funding, including legal defense, medical, psychosocial, and relocation support for defenders at risk, that is not subject to the same registration timelines and penalties as standard development funding;
5. Reaffirm, in law and in practice, Nigeria's constitutional guarantees of freedom of association, expression, and assembly, and its obligations under the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders to ensure a safe and enabling environment for defenders.

The organizations remain committed to the holistic protection of human rights defenders at risk and to safeguarding the civic space in which they operate. While we support legitimate transparency in the use of foreign funding, we firmly reject the use of regulatory mechanisms as instruments of surveillance, censorship, and intimidation against those who defend human rights in Nigeria.

The five organizations urge the National Assembly to withdraw SB. 1034 immediately and to ensure that any future regulatory framework protects, rather than endangers, those who defend human rights in Nigeria.

Issued by:

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Partnership for Justice (PJ)
Front Line Defenders (FLD)
West African Human Rights Defenders (WAHRDN)
Protection International (PI)