



National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS)

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NANTS Hqtrs Secretariat

...Promoting trade justice and economic development

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PRESS RELEASE

NANTS URGES SOUTHEAST TRADERS TO END THE MONDAY "SIT-AT-HOME" — IT HARMS LOCAL PEOPLE, NOT THE GOVERNMENT.

Abuja, Nigeria — 29 January 2026

The **National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS)** today appeals directly to Governments, traders and market leaders in Nigeria's South-East geo-political zone to discontinue the weekly **Monday "sit-at-home"** observance. NANTS notes that what began as a political protest in solidarity with the detained leader of a separatist movement has long ceased to achieve its stated aim, yet continues to inflict severe economic and social harm on ordinary traders, market workers and households across the region.

THE SAD REALITY AND OUR SAD OBSERVATIONS:

On a positive side NANTS observes that through effective reasoning and dialogues, the sit-at-home practice, including the spate of insecurity has started dwindling in the South-East geo-political zone, and this is clearly noticeable with the huge return of Ibo sons and daughters to the South-East during the just-concluded 2025 Christmas celebration, and the quiet and peaceful conduct of the festive period in the entire zone during the season.

Regrettably, the recent deployment of force in closing Onitsha main market by Governor Soludo of Anambra State, a clear manifestation of mis-governance, show of power and the lack of tact and diplomacy which can only spur and aggravate monumental reactivation of the wounds and a reminder to the South-East traders of the failure of South-East political leaders to galvanize and assert noble efforts towards the release of their son, Nnamdi Kalu. Soludo's action is a further mark of failure, a direct affront to the traders and entire people of South-East, and indeed, a reminder that unlike Sunday Ogboho who has just recently been accorded pardon and has returned from exile in Germany courtesy of the South-West political leaders, Nnamdi Kalu should remain in incarceration, perhaps because of the conspiracy and or indolence of some power-drunk and vision-less South-East leaders. The closure of Onitsha main market lacks wisdom but amounts to nothing but pouring petrol on fire. The Governor's action could trigger traders bold resistance/fight back, but is also capable of significantly drawing the attention, sympathy and solidarity of their peers in other South-East States thereby provoking and reawakening the dwindling sit-at-home practice and other vices associated with insecurity.

The NANTS National body also notes that beyond the closure of Onitsha market, we have observed that some Security Agencies in the South-East are part of the complications, reason being that rather than secure and facilitate easy movement of transporters, persons, goods and services, they concentrate on toll collection and constitute obstacles to the free flow and movement in the region even on Mondays.

The National Association of Nigerian Traders, therefore call on Governor Soludo to deescalate tension in Anambra State, consider the path of wisdom and withdrawal of force, and reopen the Onitsha main market immediately. We further call on Security Agencies in the South-East to de-emphasize 'settlement and toll collection' and improve security oversight and seriousness that will encourage traders to come out for their business on Mondays without fear of molestation and treat to life.

FURTHER CALL ON GOVERNMENTS AND SECURITY AGENCIES:

NANTS further calls on Federal and State Authorities, Relevant Security Agencies, and particularly, all Governors of the Sout-East States to:

- i. Quickly come together, emulate the South-West leaders by putting every political machinery in motion to facilitate the release of Mazi Nnamdi Kalu from prison.
- ii. Think out of the box by exploring possible incentives such as mandating all government contractors and suppliers to undertake their procurement in local markets only on Mondays. This can constitute a subtle way of appealing to traders, transporters and the overall economic operators to re-tool Monday market operations.
- iii. Convene consultative meetings with NANTS key leaders in the South-East, other traders Unions and market leaders with a view to:
 - a) identifying the unknown gunmen that terrorize traders from opening their markets and shops on Mondays,
 - b) identifying ways and means of addressing the general insecurity issues responsible for traders keeping away from markets on Mondays.
 - c) Devising and supporting immediate measures on the roads and market places that protect traders and transporters to ensure that markets can be safe on Mondays.
- iv. Investigate and address threats or coercion used to enforce sit-at-home observances, and protect citizens' right to trade and move freely.
- v. Commission rapid economic relief and IGR-recovery plan for major trade hubs disproportionately affected (Onitsha, Aba, Nnewi, Owerri, Orlu, Enugu, etc), and coordinate with market Associations to reduce further losses.
- vi. Refrain from harsh-tone and authoritative pronouncements that order traders back to markets without their consultations, inputs and adequate measures in place.

APPEAL TO OUR TRADERS AND MARKET LEADERS:

Having stated the above, while we await the re-opening of the market, NANTS wishes to talk to her members and all traders across the South-East. The National Body, recognize the right to peaceful protest as succinctly enshrined in Chapter 4 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. We also recognize that the people of the South-East have legitimate grievances to express. However, it is our strong opinion that the Monday sit-at-homee is enemical to our chosen profession and bad to economic we being it will continued to produce immeasurable and unquantifiable harm to the region's economy and on our everyday people - the traders.

Recurrent Monday shutdowns disrupt the busiest trading day of the week for many South-East market days on which perishable goods are moved, supply chains are scheduled, and incomes for thousands of traders, market women and transporters are earned. When markets close, daily wages and petty incomes are lost immediately by mostly traders and their dependents.

Furthermore, our research and intelligence reports estimate very large cumulative economic losses across the South-East since the observance began including (i) multi-trillion-naira losses to commerce, (ii) reduced income to traders and internally generated revenue for states, (iii) lost jobs for SMEs and deterred investments, (iv) worsened insecurity, (v) interruption of schooling and healthcare access on closed days, (vi) increased cost of doing business (price shocks, spoilage, supply interruption, (vii) reinforced climate of fear that drives away long-term investment and stalls local economic recovery. Moreover, NANTS have further observed that out of fear and insecurity associated with the sit-~~at~~-home,

traders who come in from far and wide, including foreign traders from most West and Central African countries have been largely discouraged to enter South-East zone for their business transactions. These reports show the effect is on the region's businesses and citizens, and not on the Federal Institutions the action intends to influence.

Specifically, NANTS wonders why sustained Monday shutdowns have not demonstrably changed federal government policy nor produced the public outcomes the original organisers sought. Instead, the burden falls squarely on traders, daily wage earners, customers and vulnerable families who depend on open markets and transport every week. Research and local reporting repeatedly indicate that the economic pain is borne locally by our members in South-East. The plain fact is that the government which is the target of the sit-at-home has remained adamant and unmoved, hence, the need for wisdom, retreat and change of tactics.

In view of the foregoing observations, NANTS therefore appeals to all traders and Market leaders in the South-East to:

- i. Work towards ending the weekly Monday sit-at-home observance and allow markets to operate on Mondays as normal.
- ii. Collaborate with community leaders, Local Government and Security Agencies to insist on safe, lawful protest channels that do not halt commerce or threaten livelihoods.
- iii. Prioritise market recovery plans including coordinated re-opening drives, market-level security arrangements and public information that restores buyer confidence.
- iv. Review actions that are peaceful and social and economic hurt-free options for expressing their grievances against the government's continued incarceration of the IPOB leader.

COMMITMENT FROM NANTS

NANTS is fully committed to, and stands with traders. We will continue to:

- i. Advocate for the immediate end of the Monday sit-at-home and for policies that protect traders' livelihoods.
- ii. Partner with market leaders, civil society and Local Governments to mobilise practical steps for safe market operations and economic recovery.
- iii. Expose and report any coercive actors who use force or intimidation to enforce shutdowns, while promoting peaceful, lawful means of redress.
- iv. Engage in concerted advocacy and campaigns for return and restoration of lost customers, particularly, foreign traders who have lost faith in South-East markets.
- v. Collaborate with Governments to ensure effective representation of traders in all policy making processes.

“We call on our brothers and sisters in the South-East to choose livelihoods over shutdowns. The time to rebuild our economy which is largely anchored on commerce and secure our markets is now for the sake of families who depend on Monday trade.”

Signed:

For: National Association of Nigerian Traders (NANTS)



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