



IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO NIGERIANS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM ON APPLICATIONS FOR ISSUANCE OF NIGERIAN PASSPORT

Upon assumption of duties, the High Commissioner, Ambassador Sarafa Tunji Isola, held series of strategic meetings, including engaging the immigration section of the Mission, to brainstorm on the best way to address the incessant allegations of corruption and other negative reports on the issuance of the Nigerian passport in London, as well as to restore the Mission's credibility in the process.

2. Following the strategic meetings, on Wednesday 19th May 2021, the High Commission was able to identify and break the gang of passport racketeers in London. The Mission also discovered that, 18 innocent Nigerians paid between £200 and £350 to racketeers in their desire to urgently acquire or renew Nigerian Passports. Unfortunately, the racketeers issued them with forged documents with a promise to assist the applicants through a "non-existent Abuja list" in the Mission. The Mission sympathises with the past victims, whilst admonishing our fellow Country men and women to always avail themselves with official channels in the Mission for assistance on compassionate grounds and desist from patronizing unofficial agents/touts.

3. It would be recalled that Mission commenced the processing of passport application on 13th April 2021, following the lifting of the lockdown restrictions by the British government. As of 31st March, 2021, there was a backlog of 18,000 applications awaiting processing, which were accumulated between December 2019 to March 2021. Officers and staff of the Immigration Section, worked tirelessly to run a crash programme to reduce the backlog. Currently, the Mission has issued a total of 8,852 passports out of 9,964 passports that were captured from the backlog.

4. It is also, pertinent to mention that there has been a surge in the applications between April 2021 and now, in addition to the existing backlog. Meanwhile, Mission has cleared backlog of applications up to August 2020. However, any applicant yet to be captured within the period under reference can come to the Mission with proof of payment, while applicants whose dates of payment fall after August 2020, should await Mission's letters of invitation. The Mission hereby confirms the availability of sufficient passport booklets for deserving applicants in the United Kingdom throughout this period and beyond.

On this note, Mission wishes to express its strong appreciation to the Comptroller-General of the Nigeria Immigration Service, for ensuring adequate passport booklets are made available to the Nigeria High Commission, London. The Mission therefore appeals to applicants to be patient, as it endeavours to deliver on its mandate to all Nigerians in the UK.

5. Consequently, Mission has reviewed its activities during this period and acknowledges the need to attend to Nigerians who have urgent reasons to renew their Passports. In this regard, the Mission would resume the Fast-Track Services in line with global best practices. Furthermore, to curb touting and racketeering, the following measures has been put in place:

- i. Continuous processing of applications and dates of appointments in line with the current practice.
- ii. Administrative charge of £20 on all passport processing
- iii. To resume the £100 (One Hundred Pounds) Fast Track service with effect from Monday, 24th May 2021. All payment must be in postal orders clearly addressed to the Nigeria High Commission, London for transparency and accountability purposes.
- iv. We shall continue to adopt extra vigilance to discover and eliminate corrupt actions associated with Passport application and processing in the Mission. This is in line with the zero tolerance of the President Muhammadu Buhari administration as clearly spelt out in the Mission's Charter.
- v. Future reports of corrupt practices must be fact based with evidence and devoid of frivolous innuendos and allegations. This will assist the Mission in this onerous task of anti-corruption drive. Mission seeks the cooperation of the public to report anyone aiding and abating corrupt practices to this email address publiccomplaints@nigeriahc.org.uk.
- vi. Mission will continue to investigate possible in-house collaborators for appropriate disciplinary action.

6. Finally, we hereby commend all Nigerians (Applicants) who have followed laid down rules and due processes since the commencement of the exercise. We cannot thank you enough.

God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria

**Nigeria High Commission
London
21st May, 2021**