

Globacom's Alleged Sack of Married Women Violates Equality Rights; Represents an Attack on the Institution of Marriage and Family Life

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****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

SPACES FOR CHANGE is deeply concerned about the alleged mass sack of married women formerly in the employ of Globacom Communications Limited. On Thursday, March 15, 2018, thirteen (13) married women, all of whom were ex-staff of Globacom Communications Plc (herein referred to as GLO), lodged a complaint against their former employer for wrongful disengagement, gender discrimination and gross violation of their social and economic rights.

Globacom Limited, a Nigerian multinational telecommunications company headquartered in Lagos, is a privately-owned telecommunications carrier that started operations on 29 August 2003. The telecommunications company disengaged the services of these women on March 9, 2018 for no apparent reason. No reason was cited in the disengagement letters made available to SPACES FOR CHANGE.

Prior to the mass sack, GLO conducted a staff profiling exercise few months earlier. This comprised of internal personnel interviews where female employees were specifically asked questions about their marital status, how many children they have and other personal information was held. The interviews were conducted between December 29, 2017 and January 4, 2018. After the one to two minutes interview, a professional photographer was asked to take full length and passport-sized photograph of all the employees interviewed. In the wake of this exercise, there were speculations among staff that the interviews were designed to facilitate promotion and other improvements in staff welfare. To their chagrin, an influx of new personnel was noticed shortly thereafter. It was when the new employees were assigned to take over their positions that the prospects of an imminent job loss dawned on them.

S4C found that Globacom employs its personnel in the name of multiple companies. As a result, most employees have multiple employment letters either issued by Contact Center, Dragnet Ventures Ltd, All Transcontinental Enterprises, GML Ltd and so forth. Sangowawa, the then head of Globacom's Human Resources signed all the different employment letters whether issued by Contact Center, Dragnet Ltd, All Transcontinental Enterprises and so forth. In effect, Globacom recruited all of the employees in the name of the different companies.

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At the point of interviews, prospective employees were interviewed by Globacom staff while the Chairman himself, Dr. Mike Adenuga, conducts the final interview. A review of some of the employment letters showed that Globacom issued letters in the name of Contact Center Services to some employees while Dagnet Ventures and others issued confirmation of employment. However, all correspondences regarding staff remuneration, staff designations, staff appraisals, staff transfers and recommendation letters were all exchanged directly between Globacom Ltd and the employees.

In an internal memo dated March 9, 2018, Globacom issued disengagement letters to the affected women, and directed the affected staff to report to another outsourcing company, GML (Global Manpower Ltd) whom most staff claimed that they had not had any previous correspondence with. No reasons were disclosed in the disengagement letters.

At an interview with SPACES FOR CHANGE, all (13) women reiterated that they have never been queried or disciplined for either low or nonperformance. None of them had ever been involved in any form unprofessional or dishonorable conduct. Most of them had been in the employ of GLO for up to 10 years and more. Periodic staff appraisals conducted by the company during the period attest to their glowing records of professionalism and strong work ethics. The only thread linking together all the sacked personnel is their shared marital status: they were all married women. Substantiated media reports show that about 90 married women were affected by the mass sack.

One month salary was paid lieu of notice. Tax deductions on the last salary were spectacularly different from previous deductions. All were outrageously taxed of their monthly salary. Pension deducted was last paid in September for most of them.

The highest number of married women sacked was from Lagos. The people that previously occupied the position of Cluster Managers and Shop Managers comprised single, married ladies and men. Currently, they have all been replaced with single ladies and men. Ex-employees of Globacom identified 120 female married personnel of Gloword, (Glo Friendship Centers) PAN Nigeria. Out of the 120 women, 98 were disengaged leaving only 22. Out of 52 single ladies who are staff of Gloworld, only 4 were affected by the mass sack.

S4C reviewed the key performance indicator of a particular affected employee. There was no year that she scored below outstanding. Another employee scored 100% in January 2018, a month before the sack and was given a token of appreciation by the deputy head of department. None of the sacked women had ever received a warning or query for non-performance prior to the

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disengagement. In January, some of the disengaged were even invited for promotional interview. All of these demonstrate that the mass sack had nothing to do with employee performance.

SPACES FOR CHANGE condemns in very strong terms, the alleged mass sack of women on the basis of the gender and marital status. Such corporate (in)action not only violates human dignity and the principles of equality of rights, but also represents an attack on the institution of marriage and family life. Disengaging long-serving personnel without a valid reason is an arbitrary decision that is condemnable, objectionable and insensitive, especially at a time of growing economic crisis in the country. If the testimonies of the 13 women are anything to go by, GLO's *no-married-women* policy constitutes a marked violation of social and economic rights, including the constitutional prohibition of non-discrimination on the basis of gender.

We call on GLO to clear the air on the circumstances leading to the sack of married women in their employ and replacing them with non-married personnel. We are further demanding an apology and compensation for the wrongful disengagement and infringement on their fundamental human rights.

Should GLO fail to comply with this ultimatum, we reserve the right to take every necessary step to protect the rights of the affected women.

SIGNED:

SPACES FOR CHANGE

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