

# NIMASA/GWVSNL SALARY ROW: 10 unpaid staff die of hunger, many roam street – Akemefa

*\*Starving workers raise alarm, send SOS to Buhari, Amaechi \*Matter receiving due attention – Minister  
of Transportation*

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ASABA – TEN workers of Global West Vessel Specialist Nigeria Limited, GWVSNL, a maritime security company whose contract with the Nigerian Maritime and Safety Agency, NIMASA, to provide security on the nation's waterways, was tersely terminated in 2015 by the Federal Government, have died of hunger while waiting for payment of their outstanding salaries and allowances.

Chairman, Working Committee of the company, Engr. Vincent Akemefa and Captain Albert Brakoru (member), who spoke to NDV on the plight of the 400 unpaid workers for seven years, said numerous staff were currently homeless, appealing to the Minister of Transportation, Rt. Hon Rotimi Amaechi to prevail on NIMASA to pay their wages.

### **How it started**

Akemefa told NDV: "It all started on the 5th of October, 2015 when the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC, investigated the activities of GWVSNL and NIMASA. In the process, it stopped GWVSNL partnership operation with NIMASA and the company's account was frozen.

"Meanwhile, till date, even though GWVSNL won the case instituted against it by EFCC in the Federal High Court, Lagos, on July 15, 2020, they are still not yet paid by NIMASA.

### **SOS**

"However, today, we, over 400 workers of GWVSNL, are still appealing to the Federal Government and well-meaning Nigerians to prevail on Rt. Hon Rotimi Amaechi, the Minister of Transportation to direct NIMASA to pay the salaries and allowances arrears of GWVSNL workers for a period of seven years because many are presently homeless.

"Marriages broken, over 10 staff have died of starvation and many are presently suffering from various kinds of ailments due to lack of medical attention.

"The court ruled that the EFCC should unfreeze the company's account and directed NIMASA to pay GWVSNL workers their salaries and allowances, but Amaechi disobeyed court order and refused to do the needful over the years," he said.

Akemefa added: "Although, GWVSNL escaped in a no-case submission against the criminal trials, it instituted a case against the agency for claims ranging from breach of contract to demand for further damages for the Federal Government deliberately breaching the PPP contract which the Federal Government (NIMASA) entered with GWVSNL founder, the late Captain Romeo Etima in 2012."

### **Complaints lodged**

"We have reported the lingering issue to the federal ministries, office of the Attorney-General of the Federation, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Productivity, but to no avail.

"It is pertinent to state that the Federal Government signed the partnership agreement with GWVSNL for a period of 10 years in order to protect Nigeria's waterways; to monitor crude oil vessels, etc through which GWVSNL recovered billions of naira from 2012 to 2015 for the Federal Government.

"But today, the reverse is the case, the 25 boats bought by GWVSNL which are presently in the custody of the EFCC, one called NIMASA-Barugu sank at Lagos dockyard on the 3rd of April 2022. And more are yet to sink if something is not done to salvage the situation.

“Therefore, they call on President Buhari to intervene by prevailing on Rt. Hon Amaechi to direct the Managing Director of NIMASA to pay GWVSNL workers arrears of their salaries and allowances for seven years,” he added.

In a letter by Director, Legal Services/Board Secretary, NIMASA, Victor Egejeru dated July 22, 2021 to AI-Mushahid had indicated: “...GWVSL’s PPP is still the subject of litigation both in regular and arbitrator court...”

He listed four cases, including the Federal Government of Nigeria versus Patrick Akpobolokemi and five others, Final Award in Arbitration proceedings between GWVSNL and NIMASA, saying: “While we empathize with the employees of GWVSNL on the inability of the company to pay their salaries, the agency is unable to comment on this at this stage for the reasons adduced above.”

However, Crowther Okikpe, Consultant to GWVSNL, in a letter dated August 10, 2021, faulted the NIMASA July 22, 2021 letter, stating: “Presently, there are no pending cases between GWVSNL Limited and NIMASA which has anything to do with the debt owed the company by NIMASA. The amount owed the company for work done is not in contention between NIMASA and the company or the PPP contract.

“In respect of FHC/L/553C/15 –FRN v. Patrick Akpobolokemi and 8 others, the case has since ended in July, 2020, where the honourable court in its ruling discharged the company, who made the 2nd defendant therein. It was a criminal matter. NIMASA was not a part to the case and did not appeal against the ruling of the court,” he added.

### **Under consideration – Amaechi**

Minister of Transportation, Amaechi, in a letter by the Director, Maritime Safety and Security Department, Federal Ministry of Transportation, Babatunde Bombata, April 14, 2022, to AI-Mushahid Initiative for Transparency and Accountability, on the nonpayment of over six years salaries and allowances of GWVSNL workers, said the matter “is receiving due attention.”