



INTERNATIONAL ACTION NETWORK  
FOR GENDER EQUITY & LAW

**BY EMAIL TO [iyom2001@yahoo.com](mailto:iyom2001@yahoo.com) ONLY**

September 12, 2017

The Chairwoman  
House Committee on Women Affairs  
Ebonyi State House of Assembly

Honorable Commissioner  
Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs  
Ebonyi State

Honorable Commissioner  
Women and Youths Affairs  
Ebonyi State

**CARE OF:** Women's Organization for Gender Issues (WOGI)  
Plot 1400, Maman Nasir, Asokoro, Abuja, NIGERIA

Dear Madam Chairwoman and Honorable Commissioners:

We are an international network of lawyers dedicated to protecting the human rights and dignity of women and girls. We were concerned to read about the appalling violation of rights of the widow Mrs. Maria Okoh, who was subjected to unlawful gender-biased treatment in your state, including a degrading parade through the village and a fine, simply for an alleged private consensual relationship in her home. We accordingly have been in contact with our esteemed colleague in Nigeria, Her Excellency Barrister Stella Odife, of the NGO the Women's Organization for Gender Issues (WOGI) concerning the urgent need to address this issue, both for Mrs. Okoh, and all widows in your state.

Since we understand that no widower would ever be subjected to such treatment in such circumstances, we seek an update on what action your state government has taken to resettle Mrs. Okoh, and to compensate her for the serious infringement of her rights. We also inquire what other steps will be taken to ensure that no widow in your state will be subjected to such treatment again. Since we understand that no treatment or policy can be enforced selectively against widows that is not enforced against widowers, further efforts at community education and sensitization are needed.

As part of the international community supporting gender equality and the rule of law, we appreciate WOGI's work on this issue. We will look forward for an update from Barr. Mrs. Odife concerning this matter, and appreciate your concerted efforts to take the actions she suggests, to reform the cultural practices that deprived Mrs. Okoh of her rights, and to ensure that widows in your state can enjoy full and equal rights with widowers.

We thank you in advance for your attention to this urgent matter.

Very truly yours,

Nancy J. Newman  
President