

5th July, 2019

The Chairman
Special Presidential Investigation Panel for the Recovery of Public Property
Office of the Special Assistant to the President on Prosecution
Plot 2802, Idris Kutigi Street,
Off Idris Kpaki Road,
Opposite AIT Office
Asokoro Extension,
Abuja

Dear Sir,

PETITION AGAINST DANA AIR GROUP AND DEMAND FOR THE RECOVERY OF ALL MONIES RECEIVED FROM INNOCENT CITIZENS WITH AN UNREGISTERED NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION

We are a non-governmental organization and non-partisan human rights and development league with the mandate to protect and promote universally recognized human rights, accountability and environmental justice in Nigeria and Africa, in accordance with international standards and for this course we seek to foster the cause of transparency and accountability.

Our locus for this petition is based on the foregoing. However, our demand is prompted by the report published by the International Centre for Investigative Reporting (ICIR) on the 20th May, 2019¹. The report details the investigation carried out by the ICIR on the Dana Group wherein in-flight donations was received from passengers on board to cater for supposed children with disabilities in orphanage home. In the report, it was stated that the Non-Governmental Organisation, Sri Sia Foundation which was to cater for the disabled children was not registered as an NGO in Nigeria. It was reported that the NGO was only registered 2 months after the ICIR demanded information on the propriety or otherwise of the NGO. It was equally stated in the report that the initiative to use the inflight donations was conceived by the defunct Bellview Airline in collaboration with Dana Group. It was reported that the Sickle Cell Foundation Nigeria's partnership with Dana Air started in September 2009 and ran till June 3, 2012, when the airline's plane crashed in Lagos, killing 159 people which made the Nigerian aviation authorities to consequently suspended the airline's operation.

It was reported that when Dana Air resumed full commercial flight operation in January 2014 after the Aviation authorities lifted the 2012 suspension, the Dana Group discontinued its partnership with the Sickle Cell Foundation Nigeria and printed its own inflight envelope donation to raise money for an illegitimate foundation.

It conveyed in the report under reference that about N18 million was raised from the inflight donation for nearly two and a half years period that the partnership lasted with Sickle Cell Foundation. Then, the Sickle Cell Foundation printed and branded the envelopes with key messages on sickle cell, a genetic disease that has more people living with it in Nigeria than anywhere else in the world.

It was reported that at the time of the launch of the inflight envelope donation, Ramesh Hathiramani, chairman of Dana Group, said the collaboration was to raise money for the Sickle Cell Centre. "We believe that the contributions of our passengers will go a long way towards funding some of the projects of the Centre and ensuring that all persons affected by the disorder can live normal, pain-free lives," he said. It was reported that as part of the investigation, the ICIR also investigated how an entity that is not registered to operate in the country was able to open a bank account, without providing evidence of legal registration with the Corporate Affairs Commission. Then the ICIR sent enquiries to Wema Bank to explain how the bank opened an account for a non-profit organisation that

¹ <https://www.icirnigeria.org/for-years-dana-air-received-donations-from-nigerians-for-illegal-charity/>

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was not registered with the CAC. It was reported that both Funmi Falola, the bank's head of Brand and Marketing Communications and Tunde Mabawonku, the bank's Chief Finance Officer, declined to respond.

It was also discovered that Ramesh Hathiramani, chairman of Dana Group, is a director in Wema Bank, with substantial shareholding and also one of the longest-serving directors at the bank.

It was revealed that one of the in-flight envelopes carried a misleading email address (sathyasainigeria@gmail.com) that enquiries can be channeled. It was discovered that Sathya Sai is an international non-denominational voluntary organisation, founded by a spiritual teacher, Sathya Sai Baba. It originated from India and has branches in many countries, including Nigeria. The ICIR discovered that Ramesh Hathiramani, chairman of Dana Group, is the chair of Zone 9A (Africa) Sathya Sai International Organisation.

In the report, the ICIR confirmed its ignored demand since July, 2018 that Dana Group should account for the in-flight donation received from Dana Air passengers but the request had been ignored until recently. Okwudili Ezenwa, Media and Communications manager at Dana Air told the ICIR that the questions about the expenditure of the in-flight donation would take a long time to respond to. It was reported that he agreed to meet the reporter at Dana House in Isolo, Lagos to respond to some of the questions raised by ICIR. Two days to the appointment, Ezenwa rang to say that he had to travel and would not be available again for the interview.

The ICIR had asked Ezenwa to send the annual reports of the Sri Sai Vandana Foundation, even if other requests would take the foundation longer time to respond. Although, he agreed to attend to the request, ICIR has not received any official response from the Dana Group and its foundation.

The above allegations suggest deceit, obtaining by false pretence and outright theft as the above relayed allegations is disheartening. We believe Dana Group leveraged on the philanthropic nature of benevolent Nigerians who gave for a worthy cause to help humanity for some other fraudulent purposes. We find the above allegations worthy of immediate investigations with the aim of recovering all monies received from the passengers by Dana air.

We write this petition as voice of the people to demand that Dana Group accounts for every penny received from Nigerians. Non-Profit organisations are not to make profit and should be accountable. The revelations suggest that the said organisation was not registered and therefore was not filling annual returns to ensure its activities are properly monitored. We hereby implore your office to take up this report and look critically at the allegations with the aim of properly, effectively and painstakingly investigating with the sole aim of recovery of all monies received from innocent Nigerians via the in-flight donations from the 2014 till date. Our demand is strongly anchored and founded on our patriotic mandate to promote and foster accountability while ensuring transparency and participatory governance in the country.

We look forward to your usual prompt response and action.

While thanking you, accept our best regards.

Yours faithfully,



Olanrewaju Suraju
Chairman