



Human &
Environmental
DEVELOPMENT AGENDA



THE
CORNER
HOUSE

UK acquittal of former Nigerian oil minister Alison-Madueke is no answer to wider corruption allegations

Joint statement on behalf of the Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ), the Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) / Transparency International Nigeria, the Human and Environmental Development Agenda (HEDA Resource Centre), Spotlight on Corruption, and The Corner House (UK).

Last month a London jury [acquitted](#) Diezani Alison-Madueke, along with her brother Doye Agame and businesswoman Olatimbo Ayinde, of all bribery charges against them. This brings an end to a five-month trial and 13-year investigation into gifts and perks received in the UK by the former Nigerian oil minister.

Holding one of the most powerful ministerial positions in former President Goodluck Jonathan's cabinet between 2010-2015, Alison-Madueke oversaw the Nigerian oil industry at a time when \$20 billion in oil profits were reported to the Nigerian Senate as having "[leaked](#)" from the Nigerian National Petroleum Company.

This lost revenue has sparked corruption investigations in multiple countries. The US Department of Justice [seized assets](#) linked to the ex-minister totalling \$53.1 million, with the proceeds [returned](#) to Nigeria in early 2025. Meanwhile the Nigerian authorities have themselves [recovered numerous assets](#) linked to Alison-Madueke, surpassing a value of \$87.8 million.

In 2023, UK prosecutors charged Alison-Madueke with five counts of accepting bribes and one count of conspiring to commit bribery during her tenure as oil minister. These [charges](#) centered on Alison-Madueke's "[life of luxury](#)" in London, which was said to be bankrolled by a cast of oil tycoons and industry insiders, including Kolawole Aluko, Olajide Omokore, Benedict Peters, Igbo Sanomi, Kevin Okyere and Olatimbo Ayinde. The jury heard [evidence](#) about her use of a chauffeur-driven car and private jet, lavish spending sprees, including £2 million worth of luxury goods from Harrods, and stays at multiple luxury properties in London's elite postcodes.

This high-profile corruption investigation led by the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA) was plagued by evidential challenges from start to finish. With the cooperation of the Nigerian authorities, UK prosecutors were able to put in multiple international letters of request for evidence from the Nigerian authorities and UK investigators undertook at least seven trips to Nigeria. But the NCA faced serious delays in receiving the requested material – not only from Nigeria, but also the Seychelles and Switzerland – while the defence claimed that vital evidence which would back up their versions had "[disappeared](#)" from Nigeria.

The credibility of the prosecution evidence also came under serious question during a mid-trial intervention by the Nigerian Attorney General, who [claimed](#) that the third defendant, Olatimbo Ayinde,

was in fact an informant for the Nigerian authorities who had been asked to “play along” with the payment of a \$5 million bribe. This unexpected development left British prosecutors in a bind, asking the jury to trust some evidence obtained from Nigerian authorities while simultaneously urging them to disregard evidence related to Ayinde as unreliable.

Meanwhile the narrow framing of the UK’s case meant that any allegations that government contracts were improperly awarded in exchange for bribes were excluded. The jury was invited to find that Alison-Madueke’s alleged acceptance of bribes was an improper performance of her role as a minister, without considering whether they were connected to multi-million dollar contracts won by the oil executives said to be behind the payments. In the witness box, Alison-Madueke testified that the expectations of cabinet ministers and the culture of gift giving in Nigeria are significantly different to the UK, while past episodes of British ministers accepting gifts were also pointed to by the defence as being no different to her alleged conduct.

The acquittals in this London trial are a major blow for UK law enforcement and a setback for global anti-corruption efforts. But this is no time for the UK to row back on its commitment to tackling corruption, particularly when what happens in the UK [harms](#) those in Nigeria and other countries in the Global South. UK leadership in the fight against dirty money is all the more important now given the United States rollback on anti-corruption efforts, which [risks a race to the bottom](#) for Africa’s natural resources. The UK must also use its upcoming [Illicit Finance Summit](#) and its leadership of international bodies, from the Financial Action Task Force to the G20, to ramp up accountability and asset recovery efforts so that [corrupt corporate profits](#) and [stolen wealth](#) are returned to benefit the ordinary people of countries most impacted by corruption.

The failure of the UK’s narrow case against Alison-Madueke should also spur on, not stall, ongoing enforcement efforts in Nigeria. Ultimately, the UK’s case spoke to one facet of much wider allegations that have led to [calls](#) for the ex-oil minister to face accountability at home. They did not usurp the need for Nigerian authorities and law enforcement to examine Alison-Madueke’s conduct and oversight of the oil industry. Viewing the UK acquittal as a complete answer to the questions which continue to hang over Alison-Madueke’s legacy as oil minister would be a grave mistake.

Comments

Revd David Ugolor, Executive Director of the [Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice](#) (ANEEJ), said:

“The acquittal in the UK closes one chapter, but it does not close the wider questions surrounding the governance of Nigeria’s oil wealth and the stewardship of public resources during that period. Respect for the rule of law requires that we accept the court’s verdict, but respect for accountability requires that unresolved allegations are not ignored simply because this prosecution did not succeed. The outcome of the UK case should reinforce—not weaken—the determination of both Nigeria, UK and the international community to strengthen investigations, improve cross-border cooperation, recover stolen assets, and ensure that public office is never

used for private enrichment. Ultimately, the fight against corruption is about protecting citizens' rights and ensuring that national wealth serves the public good."

Olanrewaju Suraju, Chair of the [Human and Environmental Development Agenda \(HEDA Resource Centre\)](#), said:

"This trial and ultimate acquittal of Diezani Alison-Madueke by a London jury has exposed the United Kingdom's anti-corruption enforcement efforts to global scrutiny. With Diezani walking free, the UK's efforts have fallen short, considering the successful seizure of several assets traced to Diezani in the United States and Nigeria on the basis of alleged bribery and money laundering in those jurisdictions. The delays in the UK's investigation and prosecution allowed compromised officials of the new government in Nigeria to change their position on one of the defendants, Olatimbo Ayinde, with the sudden transformation of her status from a suspect to midnight bait in the bribery set up of Diezani - a fact that never existed until two years into their administration"

Auwal Ibrahim Musa, Executive Director of the [Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre \(CISLAC\)](#) / Transparency International Nigeria, said:

"This verdict is a major setback for international anti-corruption deterrence, but it serves as an urgent wake-up call to Nigeria that true accountability and the protection of national resources and assets must be built and fiercely litigated at home, rather than outsourced to foreign jurisdictions.

While we acknowledge and respect the unanimous decision of the UK jury after 46 hours of deliberation, we want to emphasize that an acquittal does not erase the systemic vulnerabilities exposed during the trial. The trial showed how deeply embedded corruption and policy capture was within Nigeria's oil and gas sector between 2011 and 2015.

We commend the international cooperation between anti-corruption institutions and the EFCC in this case. However, our focus should now shift back to domestic accountability especially from public officials, which has always been lacking in Nigeria. The Nigerian government should ensure that the outstanding civil and criminal corruption cases against Diezani Alison-Madueke within Nigeria which have languished for years due to her physical absence, are pursued to their logical legal conclusion."

Dr Helen Taylor, Deputy Director at [Spotlight on Corruption](#), said:

"It is deeply disappointing that UK law enforcement has come out empty-handed after such a long-running investigation, but this bribery prosecution barely scratched the surface of the corruption allegations that engulfed Alison-Madueke's tenure as oil minister. Her acquittal by a jury in London on such narrow charges is simply no answer to broader allegations that may be raised in a court in Abuja. As long as these wider allegations remain untested and unresolved, it is vital that the Nigerian authorities progress their investigation to ensure full accountability for the billions in oil revenue lost from the Nigerian purse."