



**NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION  
ABUJA BRANCH (UNITY BAR)  
COMMITTEE ON LEGAL PRACTICE**

**BENCH & BAR INTERACTIONS ON THE  
HIGH COURT OF THE FEDERAL CAPITAL  
TERRITORY, ABUJA COVID-19  
PRACTICE DIRECTION 2020.**



**HON. JUSTICE H.B. YUSUF**  
FCT High Court

**HOST: HON. JUSTICE I.U. BELLO,**  
Chief Judge FCT

**18th May 2020 | 12pm**

**JOIN THROUGH:**

**<https://bit.ly/bbicpd>**



**HON. JUSTICE P.O. AFFEN**  
FCT High Court



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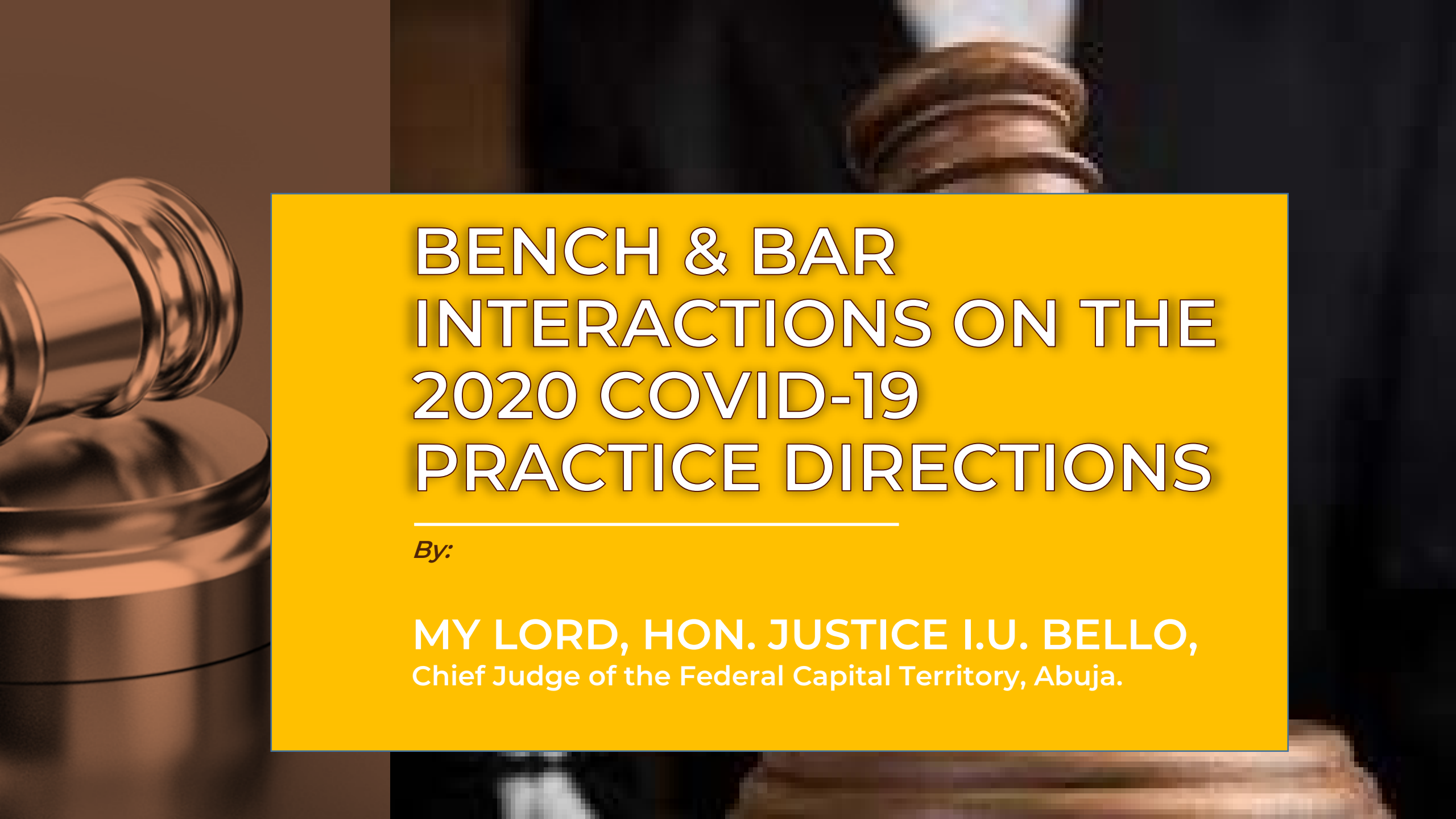
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# BENCH & BAR INTERACTIONS ON THE 2020 COVID-19 PRACTICE DIRECTIONS

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*By:*

**MY LORD, HON. JUSTICE I.U. BELLO,**  
Chief Judge of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.



# Commencement

1. This Practice Direction shall take effect from Monday, the 11<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2020.

A hand holding a pen over a document with a red tulip flower in the background.

# Application

2. This Practice Direction shall, save to the extent and as may otherwise be directed by the Chief Judge apply to both criminal and civil causes or matters in the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja as well as the Magistrates/District Courts in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

A magnifying glass is positioned over a computer keyboard. The keys for 'HEALTH' and 'SAFETY' are highlighted in a light blue color. The background is a dark blue gradient.

## Objective and Guiding Principles

3. The purpose of this Practice Direction is to regulate the sitting of the Courts of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja in the wake of the relaxation of the Stay-at-Home/Lockdown by the Federal Government of Nigeria and to ensure the effective conduct of court business without compromising the health and safety of Honourable Judges, Learned Magistrates, Court Staffs, Counsel, Litigants and other court users in conformity with extant directives and advisories issued by the Federal Government of Nigeria and/or other relevant agencies on containing the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Directions

4. All courts in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja shall resume regular sitting with effect from Monday, the 11<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2020.





# Directions

5. The period beginning from Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March to Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> May, 2020 (six weeks), being the period of the sit-at-home/lockdown declared by the Federal Government of Nigeria by reason of the COVID-19 pandemic shall be excluded for the purpose of COMPUTATION OF TIME for doing any act under the Rules of Court.



Follow The Rules

## Directions

6. The Honourable Judges and Learned Magistrates shall ensure the strict observance and enforcement of the rules of PHYSICAL DISTANCING and the wearing of FACE MASKS by court staffs, counsels, litigants and all persons inside the courtroom and/or within the precincts of the court.





## Directions

7. Every litigant or group of litigants suing or being sued together in a cause or matter shall be represented by not more than ONE counsel in the courtroom. Where the Rules of the Legal Profession or other exigency makes it imperative for a counsel to appear with another counsel, then only ONE junior counsel shall be led in the cause or matter.



# Directions

8. In order to avoid a situation where traffic in and out of Correctional Centers (Prisons) may catalyze the spread of COVID-19 to inmates, hearing in criminal matters requiring the production of defendants in custody is hereby suspended until further notice. Other criminal matters, applications for bail or remand and overnight cases shall be entertained and determined by the court.
  - PROVIDED that in considering remand applications, the Court -
    - Shall exercise necessary caution to ensure that, as far as practicable, suspects are not ordered to be remanded at correctional centers.
    - Should give due consideration to the possibility of either granting bail itself or directing the prosecutorial agency to grant administrative on reasonable terms in lieu of making a remand order.
    - Shall in the case of non-bailable offences or where it is the interest of the justice to grant the application, order that the suspect be remanded in the custody of the prosecutorial agency.



# Directions

9. Causes and matters and other proceedings that can be determined on the basis of affidavit evidence may, as far as practicable, be heard and disposed of by the Remote Hearing on virtual platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Team, Skype or other audio or video platform as may be approved by the Chief Judge. This includes cases initiated by originating summons or originating motion, applications for enforcements of fundamental right and interlocutory motions, as well as adoption of written final address and delivery of judgements/rulings. All participants in a remote hearing shall dress appropriately for court proceedings.

10. The Honourable Judges and Learned Magistrates should organize their Cause Lists to ensure that not more than five (5) cases are fixed per day. In keeping with the demands of social distancing, the court shall indicate in advance the sequence and specific time for hearing cases on the Cause List in order to avoid the convergence of counsel and parties in the courtroom from the beginning of the day's proceedings. The court shall allot time for each party to present his/her case, taking into consideration the peculiarity of each case.

## Directions





# Directions

11. In all cases (whether criminal or civil), only the parties and their counsel shall be allowed into the courtroom, subject to a maximum number of TEN (10) persons (excluding court officials) at any given time. In representative actions or other matters with multiple parties, only ONE representative shall be allowed.

A close-up photograph of a hand giving a thumbs up gesture, set against a blue background. The hand is positioned on the left side of the frame, with the thumb pointing upwards and the other fingers curled.

# Directions

12. The Honourable Judges and Learned Magistrates shall keep to the barest minimum the number of staffs/clerks working with them in the courtroom.

# Directions

13. In addition to observing social distancing and wearing of face masks, all Court officials are advised to wash their hands with soap, apply recommended hand sanitizers regularly and comply with all advisories issued by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).



A wooden gavel with a dark handle and a light-colored head, resting on a stack of old, yellowed books. The background is a warm, brownish-orange color.

# Directions

14. The Honourable Chief Judge may review this Practice Direction and/or issue further directives as prevailing circumstances may render expedient or necessary.





*Thank you*