

6 December 2022

Public Notice: The news of Nigerian Users' Reported Attack on AAX Employees and Offices in Nigeria

A public statement by the Stakeholders in Blockchain Technology Association of Nigeria ([SiBAN](#)), a self-regulatory blockchain association in Nigeria, 6 December 2022

1. It has come to our notice that certain publications in the media, specifically within the last 3 days, reported that the Nigerian users of Atom Asset Exchange (AAX) stormed AAX offices in Nigeria and attacked AAX employees. According to the widely circulated reports on both local and international media, the attack was carried out in response to the continued suspension of withdrawals by AAX since 12 November 2022. We wish to state unequivocally to the members of the public that these reports are false. No AAX employee has been assaulted or attacked and no AAX offices have been stormed by any person. In fact, AAX has no office in Lagos or any other part of the country. Nigerian AAX employees work remotely.
2. Our findings reveal that the news was first officially [reported by Legit.ng](#), a local news site, on 3 December 2022 in its report, 'Fears As Executives of Nigeria Cryptocurrency Firm Disappear, Suspend Withdrawals, Staff Beaten by Customers', authored by one Dave Ibemere. There, Legit.ng reported that "[a]ccording to reports, angry consumers stormed the AAX Nigeria headquarters demanding their money while beaten-up staff watched helplessly". Legit.ng went further to publish a photo of protesters to support its report. Though Legit.ng described the photo as "Nigerian crypto investors beat staff as exchange block withdrawal", gives credit to one Pius Utomi for the photo, and acknowledges

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Member: Blockchain Industry Coordinating Committee of Nigeria ([BICCON](#)); Fintech Alliance Coordinating Team ([FACT](#)); [Fintech Association of Nigeria](#)'s Regulators Forum; Blockchain Associations Forum ([BAF](#)); Centre for Evidence-Based Blockchain ([CEEB](#)); International Digital Asset Exchange Association ([IDAXA](#))-unofficial member status; Global Digital Asset & Cryptocurrency Association ([Global DCA](#)); Key stakeholder in Nigeria's [National Blockchain Adoption Strategy](#) by the Federal Ministry of Communications & the Digital Economy and the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA)

Facebook as the source, these have been found to be false. Unfortunately, other news sites, local and international, who also reported the alleged incident solely relied on Legit.ng's report.

3. No Nigerian AAX employee or staffer has been assaulted or attacked in any part of Nigeria, including Lagos. It was to prevent the likelihood of such break down of law and order that we issued our [initial public notice on 28 November 2022](#), informing Nigerian AAX users of the state of things and discouraging any disgruntled AAX user from “harassing or victimizing the AAX Country Manager (Nigeria), other local staff members, and AAX ambassadors nationwide” as these “persons are also facing the same situation as disgruntled users and investors are”. No incident of attack or assault has been recorded till date. Therefore, the [report](#) that claimed that “[a]lthough it's unclear when the assault happened, the Nigerian Blockchain Technology Association Stakeholders (SiBAN) [sic] confirmed the storm in an announcement on Nov. 28, urging angry users to be patient with the exchange's workers, who were also impacted by the issues” is incorrect.
4. Meanwhile, we have continued to follow up closely with developments regarding AAX. AAX is an entity rooted in Hong Kong and registered in Seychelles. It is not a registered entity in Nigeria but targets the Nigerian market. This is why AAX is registered with SiBAN as a nonresidential entity and obligated to play by the rules. The relationship so far has been largely ensuring that AAX platform, marketing, educational and awareness programs, and other activities in Nigeria are carried on responsibly. Unfortunately, the sudden suspension of withdrawals by AAX is not the decision of the Nigerian AAX team which comes under SiBAN's direct supervision. AAX global executives have been incommunicado. We will continue to monitor this situation closely. If eventually it is established that AAX is wanting, we will act in accordance with our rules to intervene.
5. In order to avoid or at least minimize misinformation and disinformation, including fake news, news agencies and media houses, local and international, should endeavor to always rely on credible sources when reporting developments about the Nigeria blockchain & crypto space. As much as possible, facts reported should be verifiable. Major actors, where suitable, can also be consulted to say their own side of the story so news is balanced. SiBAN, as a community of stakeholders in Nigeria's emerging blockchain industry, will be happy to be of any assistance to any news agency or media house that needs direct access to facts and figures in the Nigerian blockchain & crypto space. SiBAN may be contacted via media@siban.org.ng. Please copy info@siban.org.ng.
6. Meanwhile, the recent event of FTX implosion and the developing AAX story reinforce the need for regulation of the virtual assets sector. While we expect regulation to take shape in

the country, we believe that self-regulation by industry players has a critical role to play towards ensuring consumer protection, investor safety, and market efficiency. This is why SiBAN as a self-regulatory association recently issued the [Code of Conduct for Virtual Asset Service Providers \(VASPs\) in Nigeria](#) in order to encourage and promote best practices amongst VASPs. As a new Code of Conduct and SiBAN being a voluntary association, we understand that there will be implementation gaps but we will continue to do our best and apply our resources towards encouraging adoption of the Code of Conduct and implementation as well. This is a process and the journey has started. We will also endeavor to be more proactive regarding foreign platforms targeting the Nigerian market by introducing new measures. With support from industry players and relevant regulators, we strongly believe that the VASP sector in the country will become more accountable, efficient, and transparent. We therefore use this opportunity to call on industry players to align with SiBAN and adopt the Code of Conduct for VASPs while also collaborating with government regulators.

7. Nigeria being the biggest adopter of crypto in Africa and currently 11th in the world, stakeholders in the blockchain industry continue to invest considerably in blockchain & crypto education nationwide. This is to ensure that users of various blockchain & crypto platforms in the country are as informed as possible about how the technology works and the risks involved in the crypto market. We strongly discourage disgruntled users of any platform from taking laws into their hands. And we are happy that the Nigeria blockchain & crypto space has largely remained peaceful, law-abiding, and resilient over the years, boosting investor confidence in the ever-growing Nigerian blockchain industry. Here's a [Youtube video](#) of the SiBAN President speaking about the AAX matter on Channels TV on 5 December 2022.
8. SiBAN is the Stakeholders in Blockchain Technology Association of Nigeria, Nigeria's self-regulatory blockchain association. We drive blockchain awareness, adoption, and advocacy and encourage best practices through self-regulation, thus ensuring responsible innovation and regulation in Nigeria. Find out more about us here <https://siban.org.ng>.



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