

NEWS

Thursday, December 10, 2009

HOME

ABOUT US

SUBSCRIBE

MEMBERS

CONTACT US

THE GUARDIAN

[Call Nigeria for 7.6c/min](#)

Make Cheap International Calls
From Your Landline, Mobile, or PC
[Localphone.com/Nigeria](#)

[Garmin GPS Maps](#)

Southern Africa, East Africa and
Nigeria maps for Garmin users
[www.garmap.com](#)

[Meet Rich, Wealthy People](#)

Successful And Sexy Personal Ads
Elite Internet Dating At Its Best.
[EliteMeeting.com](#)

Ads by Google

ARCHIVES

[Read Past Issues](#)

NEWS

National
Metro
Africa
World
Business

OPINION

Editorial
Columnists
Contributors
Letters
Cartoons
Discussions
Outlook

SPORTS

Home
Abroad
Golf Weekly
Results

FEATURES

Focus
Policy & Politics
Arts
Media
Science
Natural Health
Law
Education
Weekend
Friday Review
Executive Briefs
Fashion
Food & Drink
Auto Wheels
Friday Worship
Saturday Magazine
Sunday Magazine
Ibru Ecumenical
Centre
Agro Care

BUSINESS SERVICES

Property
Appointments
Money Watch
Market Report
Capital Market
Business Travels
Maritime Watch
Industry Watch
Energy Report
Insurance
Compulife

Thursday, December 10, 2009

Amnesty urges end to unlawful police killings in Nigeria

- Rights groups want protection for Ribadu, others

From Madu Onuorah (Abuja), Betram Nwannekanma and Joe Adiorhio (Lagos)

AMNESTY International yesterday said there was a widespread "shocking level of unlawful police killings in Nigeria."

In a new report released yesterday in Abuja, Erwin van der Borgh, Director of Amnesty International's Africa Programme, said the Nigerian police exhibit impunity through unlawful killings, covering up of the killings, failure to investigate reported unlawful deaths, lack of independence and impartiality by police investigators and weak oversight mechanisms by the forces' high command.

In the meantime, a group of civil society organisations has urged protection and respect for the liberties of former EFCC Chairman Nuhu Ribadu and other Nigerians as the world yesterday marked human rights day.

According to the report, "the Nigerian police are responsible for hundreds of unlawful killings every year. Police don't only kill people by shooting them; they also torture them to death, often while they are in detention. The majority of the cases go un-investigated and the police officers responsible go unpunished. The families of the victims usually get no justice or redress. Most never even find out what happened to their loved ones."

The report said Police frequently claim that the victims of shootings were 'armed robbers' killed in 'shoot-outs' with them or while trying to escape custody, describing such claims as "often highly implausible."

It cited the case of a "15-year-old Emmanuel Egbo killed by a police officer in Enugu in September 2008. According to witnesses, he was playing with other children in front of his uncle's house when three police officers came up to them. One officer pulled out a gun and shot the boy, claiming he was an armed robber. He was unarmed. In August 2009, his family discovered his body had disappeared from the mortuary. As of November 2009, the body is still missing."

Amnesty International said that some police officers see

Website Search

Ads by Google

[Nigeria jobs?](#)

We've got all the jobs you'll ever want on Workcircle.
[www.WorkCircle.co.uk/Ni](#)

[Top Nigeria News](#)

Get Breaking Nigeria News From FT.com - View Articles Now
[FT.com](#)

[Career in Europe](#)

Only Jobs From € 60K + Access over 5.000 Headhunters
[www.Experteer.com](#)

[Connect With Africans](#)

At Home and Abroad. Make Friends! Chat, Music, Forums, Videos, News..
[www.afroterminal.com](#)

the killings of 'armed robbers' in detention as acceptable practice.

It noted that in June 2009, the organisation visited the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) detention centre in Abuja, which is located in a disused abattoir outside the city.

There, it said, "suspects are held in a vast warehouse previously used for slaughtering cattle. Chains are still hanging from the ceiling. When Amnesty International delegates visited the building, about 15 people were held in cells. Amnesty International delegates counted at least 30 empty bullet cases scattered on the ground." Amnesty International quoted an unofficial police source as telling it that "many "armed robbers" are taken there and shot."

Amnesty International said that one of the main problems is 'Nigeria Police Force Order 237' under which officers are allowed to shoot suspects and detainees who attempt to escape or avoid arrest - whether or not they pose a threat to life.

Erwin van der Borcht said: "Force Order 237 is so impermissibly broad. It simply gives police officers permission to shoot people. It is against international standards, and is being abused by police officers to commit, justify and cover up illegal killings.

"The government must repeal Force Order 237 and publicly announce that the use of lethal force is only allowed when strictly unavoidable to protect life. This simple step could make a big difference to the number of unlawful police killings we are seeing in Nigeria. Enforced disappearances in Nigeria are rife. Typically, in the first days or weeks following arrest, families are allowed to visit their relatives in detention. Later on, police tell them their loved ones have been "transferred to Abuja ". Other times, they simply deny any knowledge of their whereabouts."

While noting the Nigerian government stand that they do not condone extra-judicial killings, the report noted: "They are not doing enough to stop them and bring the police perpetrators to justice. Even on the rare occasions when police officers implicated in an unlawful killing are prosecuted, they are often released on bail or escape custody. Some are simply transferred to other states.

"Ending unlawful killings and enforced disappearances by the police will require serious legal reform and commitment and support from the Nigerian Police Force. The Nigerian Police Force must introduce a new code of conduct throughout its chain of command - from the very top to the bottom. If not, the cycle of violence will simply continue."

In the past four years, the Nigerian government has set up two committees to review the Nigerian Police Force and present recommendations for reform. Their recommendations are yet to be implemented.

Amnesty International admits that the Nigerian Police Force is affected by many institutional and funding weaknesses, including "severe shortage of funds. Officers do not have basic equipment, such as bullet-proof vests or handcuffs. They sometimes ask crime victims to pay for the petrol, pens and paper needed to conduct an investigation. Policing in Nigeria is dangerous work. On average, around 110 police officers are killed in shoot-outs with criminals every year."

But Erwin van der Borgh said though policing in Nigeria was "a very dangerous job, it should never be an excuse for the violation of the fundamental rights of Nigerians. And because Nigeria is a signatory to various international conventions, the Nigeria Police must be held to incredible high standards."

The Nigeria Police however said it has begun investigations into the allegations contained in the Amnesty International report linking it with unlawful police killings.

Police Public Relations Officer, Mr. Emmanuel Ojukwu, said at the presentation of the Amnesty report in Abuja that "the Nigeria Police Force does not consort with murderers in uniform. Any officer found to have violated the rules guiding use of firearms, treatment of persons in custody, torture, bail, etc, will be appropriately sanctioned in accordance with the laws. There is no immunity for those who operate with impunity."

Ojukwu, an Assistant Commissioner of Police, cited as proof Section 341 of the Nigeria Police Regulations which states: "In the individual exercise of his powers as a police officer, every officer shall be personally liable for any misuse of his powers, or for any act done in excess of his authority."

He added: "The Nigeria Police believes in openness and accountability and is a willing partner with well-meaning individuals and groups in her quest to deliver quality service to Nigerians."

But the Force accused Amnesty of carrying out a "mission to kill the Nigeria Police, wipe out her records and bury her aspirations. Amnesty has an unholy penchant to denigrate Police organisations in most parts of the world."

The Police accused Amnesty of spending "a lot of bile and vile in feeding her readers with half-truths. It begs the mind why narratives were made of persons allegedly killed by police but their names were withheld."

Accusing Amnesty of partiality in choosing to hear only the side of alleged victims without contacting it, Ojukwu said "it has denied Police of her human rights."

And as the world marks the human rights day, the Campaign for Democracy (CD) is insisting that good governance should be instituted in the country. It stated that democracy and good governance were sine-qua-non for the promotion of human rights.

In a statement, the CD's president, Dr. Joe Okei-Odumakin, said: "The unassailable truth is that democracy functions for the people of a nation through a government assembled by their collective endorsement. But in Nigeria, there are grand pretences, from the Presidency heading the Executive arm to the Legislative arm and the Judicial arm. We pretend to run a state on the platform of democracy and governance, but we lie."

She said that we could achieve democracy after devising a formula to remove our very worst from public offices where they are currently lords and grand dames and replace them with our best who are either scattered in service to other nations or are scattered in silence at home.

"We need to let our people understand that a nation which lies to itself and plays the ostrich in the comity of nations will suffer only retrogression at home and ridicule abroad. We are federal in appellation and unitary in reality," she remarked.

Also, as the world celebrates the International Anti-Corruption Day, Malam Nuhu Ribadu has unanimously emerged the winner of the first ever Civil Society Anti-Corruption Defender Award. Mrs. Zara Ribadu will receive the award on behalf of her husband at a ceremony in Lagos to be chaired by Dr. Arie van der Wiel, The Netherlands Ambassador to Nigeria.

Prof. Wole Soyinka will give the keynote address, and present the award to Ribadu's wife.

In a joint statement dated December 9, 2009, the Wole Soyinka Centre for Investigative Journalism; Socio-Economic Rights & Accountability Project (SERAP); Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC); Human and Environmental Development Agenda (HEDA), and Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR), which made up the award jury, named Ribadu as "our own equivalent of Amnesty International's Prisoner of Conscience and individual at risk."

According to a statement to be read at the ceremony on behalf of the award jury by Tayo Oyetibo (SAN), and member of the board of SERAP: "This is an exceptional gathering for an even more exceptional man. Today, the world celebrates the International Anti-Corruption Day, and we consider it a special day to celebrate the courage and commitment of a man who despite obvious personal risks, decided to say 'enough is enough', and to give his all to the fight against corruption in Nigeria."

The groups also called "on the Nigerian authorities to immediately withdraw all politically-motivated charges against Mr. Ribadu, and stop using constitutional authority and the machinery of the state to harass, intimidate and victimise him. The Nigerian authorities must publicly guarantee Ribadu's safety and security; and grant him full citizenship rights."

According to the groups: "Mr. Ribadu was chosen for the Civil Society Anti-Corruption Defender Award for leading a courageous anti-corruption drive in Nigeria as a former Head of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), and because of the persecution, harassment and intimidation he has endured and suffered and continues to suffer in the hands of the Nigerian authorities solely on the ground of his anti-corruption work. It is fair to say that today, no other individual has been so persecuted, harassed and intimidated.

"Mr. Ribadu provided outstanding leadership in fighting corruption at all levels of Nigerian life. He tracked down high and low-level officials. Mr. Ribadu recorded over 300 criminal convictions in four years, which included governors; ministers; members of parliament; bankers, and former Inspector-General of Police. He has recovered over \$5 billion stolen public funds.

"Mr. Ribadu has endured many sacrifices since he was forced out of the EFCC, including two assassination attempts on his life, and his unlawful sack from the police. Persecuted at home, separated from his family; and lonely abroad, Mr. Ribadu is now paying the price for his commitment and his work as anti-corruption defender. But he remains a source of tremendous inspiration for all anti-corruption and human rights defenders in our country. Mr. Ribadu is indeed our own equivalent of Amnesty International's Prisoner of Conscience and individual at risk. As such, he deserves recognition and better protection."

"Every government has the duty to bring to justice those responsible for crimes. But when people are subjected to unjust punishment and unfair trials, justice cannot be served. The unjust punishment Mr. Ribadu has received over the years demonstrates the Yar'Adua government's lack of respect for the rule of law and shows that the government is not genuinely committed to the fight against corruption. It is no surprise that Nigeria has performed very poorly in the Transparency International 2009 Corruption Perception Index, ranking 130th of the 180 countries surveyed."

Born November 11, 1960, Ribadu graduated from the Nigerian Law School and was called to the Bar in 1984 before joining the Nigeria Police, where he rose to become head of the Legal and Prosecution Department, Police Headquarters, Abuja. His 18-year service in the Nigeria Police culminated in his appointment as the pioneer Chairman of EFCC by the former President Olusegun Obasanjo government in 2003.

Ribadu has been recipient of several awards, as a police officer, prosecutor and EFCC chairman. He received triple Inspector-General of Police Awards in 1997, 1998 and 2000 and the Special Commendation of the Accountant-General of the Federation for successfully prosecuting some corrupt public servants in 1999. Notable Nigerian newspapers, including ThisDay, The Sun, Leadership, Nigerian Tribune and NewAge, declared him Man of the Year in 2004 and 2005. On April 15,

2008, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank) selected Ribadu for the Jit Memorial Award for Outstanding Public Service.

Tools

- ☐ [Send to a friend](#)
- ☐ [Printer-friendly version](#)

© 2003 - 2009 @ Guardian Newspapers Limited (All Rights Reserved).

Powered by [FirstEntSol LTD®](#)