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AI: Secret hangings in Nigeria

17/12/2007 19:38 - (SA)

London - Nigeria has been carrying out secret executions, despite recent reassurances by the African country's government, rights group Amnesty International claimed on Monday.

Calling for an immediate halt to capital punishment, Amnesty said it had found evidence of at least seven executions by hanging over the past two years, but fears more may have taken place.

"The Nigerian government has been misleading the world," said Amnesty's Africa programme head Erwin van der Borght.

"They must now come clean on their death penalty record, establish an immediate moratorium on all executions in the country and fully investigate how something like this could have happened," he added.

Death warrants signed by Northern governor

The rights group said all those executed were convicted in a Kano state court and relocated to prisons across the country including Jos, Kaduna and Enugu.

All the death warrants were signed by the governor of the northern state, Malam Ibrahim Shekarau, it added.

Specifically it claimed that on May 30 2006, Kenneth Ekhone and Auwalu Musa were executed by hanging in Kaduna Central Prison, having been convicted by a robbery and firearms court. They had no lawyers and were not allowed to appeal.

On June 15 2006, Salisu Babuga was transferred from Kaduna prison to Jos prison, where he was hanged, while at least four men were hanged in Enugu prison in 2006, Amnesty said.

The group also believes that at least one execution has taken place in Port Harcourt prison in the south of the country.

Amnesty quoted a Nigerian representative at the United Nations as having said on November 15 this year: "We have not carried out any capital punishment in recent years in Nigeria."

"It is inexcusable for a government to mislead about something as serious as the taking of human life," said van der Borght.

"We are shocked at what appears to be an attempt ... to deliberately deceive the international community."

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