

Boko Haram: AI Claims Babies, Children Dying in Military Detention in Borno

May 11, 2016

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Boko Haram



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Senator Iroegbu in Abuja

The Amnesty International (AI) has claimed in its latest report that 11 children under the age of six, including four babies, were among 149 people who have allegedly died this year following their detention by the military in horrendous conditions in Giwa Barracks detention centre in Maiduguri, Borno State.

The AI in its briefing on Tuesday titled: 'If you see it, you will cry: Life and death in Giwa barracks,' said that evidence gathered through interviews with former detainees and

eyewitnesses, supported by video and photos, shows many detainees may have died from disease, hunger, dehydration, and gunshot wounds.

The human rights watchdog said that their report contains satellite imagery, which it noted, corroborates witness testimonies.

According to the AI's Research and Advocacy Director for Africa, Mr. Netsanet Belay: "The discovery that babies and young children have died in appalling conditions in military detention is both harrowing and horrifying. We have repeatedly sounded the alarm over the high death rate of detainees in Giwa barracks but these findings show that, for both adults and children, it remains a place of death.

"There can be no excuses and no delay. The detention facilities in Giwa barracks must be immediately closed and all detainees released or transferred to civilian authorities. The government must urgently introduce systems to ensure the safety and well-being of children released from detention."

The International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) further claims that around 1,200 people are currently detained at Giwa barracks in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions.

According to the group, many were arbitrarily rounded up during mass arrests, often with no evidence against them, alleging that once inside the barracks, they are incarcerated without access to the outside world or trial.

AI further claimed that at least 120 of those detained are children.

"At least 12 children have died in Giwa barracks since February. Children under five years old, including babies, have been held in three overcrowded women's cells. In the last year, there has been a ten-fold increase in the number of detainees in these cells rising from 25 in 2015 to 250 in early 2016. Unsanitary conditions mean that disease is rife. Amnesty International understands that there were around 20 babies and children under five in each of the three cells," AI stated.

It also claimed that "at least 136 men had died in detention in Giwa in 2016 including 28 men who appeared to have gunshot wounds."

