

man, Mr. Chigbo Anichebe, said

He, however, expressed the

Why Four Condemned Convicts Were Executed, by Edo AG

● *EU, Britain, Falana fault executions*

Damilola Oyedele in Abuja,
Adibe Emenyonu in Benin City

While condemnations have continued to trail the execution of four condemned prisoners by the Edo State Government in Benin City on Monday, the state Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, Henry Idahagbon, yesterday disclosed that one of the condemned convicts, ThankGod Ebohs, was yet to be executed because he was sentenced to death by firing squad.

Idahagbon explained that the reason was because the Nigeria Prison Service (NPS) had only one hangman noose for executing condemned persons.

Those executed were Chima Ejiofor, Daniel Nsofor, Osarenmwinda Aiguokhan and Richard Igagu.

According to him, Ebohs was convicted in Kaduna, by a Robbery and Firearm Tribunal and the judgment stipulated the method of execution.

Idahagbon told journalists that Ebohs was convicted for robbing a family, raped the wife of the family and forced a bottle into the private part of the woman which led to her death.

He said Ejiofor, a spare parts dealer in Benin City, killed a child delivered to him out of wedlock.

The Commissioner revealed that "Chima impregnated an Edo woman and had a child. Several years later, he went back to his village and married an Igbo woman. During Christmas, he invited the child to spend the holiday with him. When the child came, he killed him, saying he did not want to have a child outside wedlock."

He stated that Aiguokhan killed his victim and buried the dismembered body in different places.

Idahagbon, therefore, advised those against death penalty to direct their energy to the National Assembly for an amendment of the law on murder and armed robbery.

To him, "These are gory

murders done by hardened criminals. If a person is convicted for armed robbery, the only thing the judge can give is the death penalty."

Meanwhile, the European Union (EU) yesterday described the execution as a big setback for Nigeria's human rights record and a negation of her commitments at the EU-Nigeria human rights dialogue.

The High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, Ms. Catherine Ashton, in a statement issued in Brussels, Belgium expressed regret, saying the action represented a break of a seven-year moratorium on death penalty.

She added that the executions also negated the commitment made by Nigeria during the annual ministerial meeting in Brussels last May, to maintain the *de facto* moratorium on executions.

In the same vein, United Kingdom's Minister for Africa, Mark Simmonds, expressed sadness at the executions, which according to him, came few months before the Universal Periodic Review of Nigeria by the UN Human Rights Council.

In a statement made available by the British High Commission in Abuja, Simmonds said: "We oppose the death penalty in all circumstances. There is no conclusive evidence of its deterrent value. It is particularly concerning that there are reportedly around 1,000 prisoners currently under sentence of death in Nigeria, and I would urge the Nigerian authorities to halt any further executions."

Also, human rights lawyer, Mr. Femi Falana (SAN), condemned the executions, arguing that instead of asking for the blood of the victims of socio-economic injustice in the land, President Goodluck Jonathan should have declared a state of emergency on official corruption which had become a component part of the Transformation Agenda.