# HOUSING IS OUR HUMAN RIGHT END FORCED EVICTIONS IN NIGERIA

In recent years, large-scale evictions and demolitions have devastated the lives of thousands of people in Nigeria. Homes and livelihoods have been destroyed amid a total absence of legal and procedural safeguards for residents.

Forced evictions are gross violations of human rights under international law, in particular the right to adequate housing.

A forced eviction is an eviction which is undertaken without legal protections such as genuine consultation with affected communities to identify all feasible alternatives; provision of adequate notice; and legal remedies, compensation and adequate alternative housing for those who cannot provide for themselves.

Those living and working in informal settlements in Nigeria have seen their homes and businesses demolished by state authorities, without the opportunity for genuine consultation before the bulldozers move in. Communities have not been given adequate notice before the demolitions and have not had access to legal remedies after the eviction. In most cases of forced evictions of residents of informal settlements across Nigeria, especially in Port Harcourt, Rivers State and Lagos State, the authorities have failed to provide adequate compensation and alternative housing to forcibly evicted residents.

We all have the right to housing and to be protected from forced evictions. The growing number of people living in inadequate conditions, in informal settlements, reflects the failure of governments to ensure the right to housing for everyone. Amnesty International's Demand Dignity campaign is working with communities, activists and local authorities to bring an end to forced evictions in Nigeria and all over the world.

AMNESTY
Index: AFR 44/009/2013



END FORCED EVICTIONS IN NIGERIA

The settlement of Makoko in Lagos State in 2008. Residents of this community have been forcibly evicted from their homes three times in eight years, the last in July 2012. The Lagos State authorities failed on every occasion to provide alternative housing and/or compensation for victims.

More than 2 million people in Nigeria have been forcibly evicted from their homes since 2000 and thousands still remain at risk. (Information from the Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE)/Social and Economic Rights Action Centre (SERAC), May 2008).

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END FORCED EVICTIONS IN NIGERIA

A makeshift home in Makoko, Lagos State, in February 2013. The Lagos State authorities had forcibly evicted people from their homes seven months earlier, in July 2012.

Makoko is one of the biggest informal settlements in Nigeria. It is a fishing community where all structures, including houses, clinics and schools, are built on stilts on the Lagos Lagoon.

Makoko is not an isolated example. Other communities in Lagos State have faced forced evictions, as well as communities beyond Lagos State, including in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

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END FORCED EVICTIONS IN NIGERIA

A vehicle belonging to the Lagos State Environmental and Special Offences Enforcement Unit (Lagos State Task Force) parked in Badia East, Lagos State. At least three people were detained inside the vehicle during the forced eviction in Badia East.

On 23 February 2013, at least 266 structures were demolished on the orders of the Lagos State Government in this informal settlement. Amnesty International delegates were told that scores of heavily armed police officers supervised the demolition and several residents who tried to resist were beaten up by police.

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END FORCED EVICTIONS IN NIGERIA

Makeshift shelters in Badia East, Lagos State

Following their forced eviction on 23 February 2013 from Badia East informal settlement, hundreds of residents were left homeless and vulnerable to other human rights abuses. As the Lagos State Government failed to provide the evicted residents with alternative housing and/or compensation, many were forced to sleep in temporary shelters made from materials salvaged from the ruins of their homes.

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END FORCED EVICTIONS IN NIGERIA

Children play football in Bundu waterfront in Port Harcourt, April 2011.

On 12 October 2009, armed security forces opened fire on a crowd of people peacefully protesting against the proposed demolition of their homes in Bundu. At least 12 people were shot and seriously injured, and eyewitnesses saw at least six dead bodies piled in the back of a police pick-up truck.

Although the risk of further eviction still exists, no demolitions have taken place in Bundu since the shooting of at least 12 people in the waterfront in October 2009.



END FORCED EVICTIONS IN NIGERIA

Austine Onwe shows the scar on his abdomen from where he was shot on 12 October 2009 in Bundu, Port Harcourt. Residents peacefully protesting against the proposed demolition of their homes were fired at by the police and the Joint Task Force (a unit which includes the police, the army and the State Security Service).

The excessive use of force by the security forces in Bundu waterfront community that day, including the use of firearms on protesters, is in violation of Nigeria's international human rights obligations and commitments. A case on the incident was filed by residents of the Bundu waterfront, supported by the Nigerian NGO Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP), at the ECOWAS Court of Justice. The case is still ongoing and no one has been held to account.



END FORCED EVICTIONS IN NIGERIA

Justina Jack is a former resident of Njemanze waterfront, Port Harcourt. She was forcibly evicted during the demolition carried out by Rivers State authorities on 28 August 2009. After losing her home, she was forced to seek refuge in a church nearby, where she lived after the demolition.

Njemanze settlement was demolished as part of Rivers State's urban renewal programme for Port Harcourt. It is estimated that between 13,800 and 19,000 people were forcibly evicted from their homes, without adequate notice and without access to legal remedies, compensation or alternative housing.



END FORCED EVICTIONS IN NIGERIA

A resident stands outside his condemned house in Abonnema Wharf, Port Harcourt, April 2011. His home and the shop next door are officially marked for demolition.

On 27 June 2012, bulldozers arrived at Abonnema Wharf waterfront and began to demolish buildings in the community under the supervision of heavily armed security forces. Thousands of people had not received adequate notice and were left homeless and with livelihoods destroyed.



END FORCED EVICTIONS IN NIGERIA

Residents pick through the remains of their destroyed homes in Abonnema Wharf, Port Harcourt, after the Rivers State government forcibly evicted thousands of people. 27 June 2012.

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