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Shell in court in the Netherlands over impacts of oil pollution in the Niger Delta

A court in The Hague is today hearing a civil case filed against the oil company Shell by four farmers from the Niger Delta region of Nigeria and Friends of the Earth Netherlands. The plaintiffs allege that oil spills from Shell pipelines destroyed their livelihoods, and are demanding a proper clean up of the pollution and compensation.

Amnesty International has researched and reported on the devastating impact of oil pollution on human rights in the Niger Delta, including the rights to food, water, health and livelihood. Amnesty has highlighted how Shell, the main operator on-land, often does not respond to oil spills quickly or effectively, and fails properly to clean up pollution. People in the Niger Delta who are affected by pollution are often denied their right to an effective remedy.

Poor maintenance of oil infrastructure, equipment failure, and illegal activity such as sabotage, theft of oil and illegal refining, all contribute to pollution in the region. The claim by Shell and other oil companies that most oil spilt in the Niger Delta is caused by illegal activity is not credible as it is based on the outcomes of the flawed oil spill investigation process. Amnesty International has recorded several inadequacies in the process, including concerns around the accuracy of data; a lack of transparency; and the fact that investigations are not independent.

Amnesty expert available:

Audrey Gaughran, Amnesty International's Africa Director who has done extensive research on the oil industry in the Niger Delta.

To arrange an interview or for any other information, please contact Louise Orton, Amnesty International Africa Press Officer, at louise.orton@amnesty.org or + 44 (0) 203 036 5475/ mobile: + 44 (0) 7904 398439