

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: AFR 44/027/2010
4 November 2010

Nigeria: Amnesty International welcomes decision to make the Greater Port Harcourt Master Plan publicly available

Amnesty International welcomes the recent commitment by the Greater Port Harcourt City Development Authority (GPHDA) to make available to the Nigerian public the full 2009 Greater Port Harcourt Master Plan, including to residents of the waterfront communities, community organizations and non-governmental organizations.

Amnesty International also welcomes the GPHDA's stated commitment to the production of a summarized version of the master plan, to ensure information contained in the master plan is easily accessible to all members of the public and affected residents of the waterfronts.

These commitments follow the publication on 28 October by Amnesty International of a report *Just Move Them: Forced Evictions in Port Harcourt, Nigeria*. The report documents the August 2009 forced eviction of residents in Njemanze waterfront, Port Harcourt. It also highlights the failure by the Rivers State government to ensure the progressive realisation of the right to housing and the failure to put in place safeguards against forced evictions in its preparation for the demolition of other settlements in the waterfront areas.

The Rivers State government claims the demolition of the waterfronts is necessary for the urban renewal of the area and to implement the Greater Port Harcourt Master Plan, the main strategy document for the city's redevelopment programme. The plan, launched in April 2009, is intended to guide the development of the city for the next 50 years. It encompasses the entire city and some surrounding areas and the "development of the waterfront promenade" is a central feature. But the plan, which is reported to run to four volumes, was developed without consultation with residents, and especially residents of the waterfront.

In addition, the Rivers State government has until now refused to make a copy of the plan available to members of the public.

On 29 October 2010, representatives of the GPHDA met with Amnesty International delegates in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The GPHDA agreed, at the meeting, to make the full master plan available to interested persons, either for viewing at their offices or for making copies, provided a written request was submitted beforehand. Amnesty international welcomes this development, and urges the GPHDA to make as many copies as freely available as possible, including an electronic version.

The GPHDA also committed to produce a summary version of the four-volume master plan and to ensure it is easily accessible to interested parties. Amnesty international urges the GPHDA to set a timeline within which they will produce and make available to members of the public, the summary version. The GPHDA should make the documents available to representatives of the waterfront community, Nigerian civil society and non-governmental organizations in its development.

Amnesty International further urges the GPHDA to undertake genuine public consultation on the 2009 Greater Port Harcourt Master Plan, including with residents of the waterfronts, allowing for input from affected people. Any alternative housing provided to people should meet adequate housing requirements, especially in terms of location, affordability, habitability and availability of public services.