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NIGERIA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IS SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE
FATE OF 17 OTHER OGONI ACTIVISTS

In the wake of the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists, Amnesty International has heightened concerns about the fate of at least 17 other Ogoni activists who are still in detention. It is feared that they too could be unfairly tried, sentenced to death and executed without right of appeal to a higher court.

"If the Nigerian government is prepared to execute Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight others just before a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, there are well-founded fears for the lives of other members of the Ogoni community who may still be tried and executed," Amnesty International said today.

"The Nigerian government seems intent on silencing opposition in the country and defying worldwide condemnation."

Amnesty International is calling on governments and companies with commercial links with Nigeria to use their influence to try to save more Ogoni political prisoners from unfair trial and execution.

The 17 detainees were arrested in mid-1994 in the wave of arrests of supporters of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) following the murder of four Ogoni leaders in May 1994. They were detained incommunicado and without charge from mid-1994 until June 1995, when they were brought before a Magistrate's Court in Port Harcourt on a "holding charge", believed to be for murder.

In June 1995 they were transferred from detention in police cells in Port Harcourt to the prison, apparently because the police cells were not sufficiently secure. A further four men were reportedly arrested on 24 October 1995 and charged with murder, also in connection with the May 1994 murders.

One of those detained since 1994 died in detention in August 1995. Clement Tusima, a 40-year-old mechanic held without charge since 26 May 1994, died on or around 14 August 1995. He had become ill in detention with diabetes in November 1994 and was reportedly denied medical treatment until after his transfer to prison custody in June 1995. Eventually transferred to hospital, where he was apparently chained to his bed, he was subsequently returned to prison on security grounds. He again became seriously ill and was taken unconscious to hospital where he died.

The Ogoni detainees were held in harsh and insanitary conditions in military custody before their transfer to prison and denied all proper medical treatment. Conditions in Nigeria's prisons are also very poor, with high rates of malnutrition, disease and death from insanitary conditions, inadequate food and practically no medical care.

An even heavier military presence has been imposed on Ogoniland in recent weeks, with roadblocks set up and travellers searched and harassed. There have been further arrests. Among those reported to have been arrested were Bishop John Miller, the Reverend Acba, and

other church ministers -- apparently for leading prayers and vigils for the Ogoni prisoners facing the death sentence -- as well as Barido Fomsi and Yira Bere, businessmen in Bori, Ogoniland's main town.

No official reason has been given for the arrests and the detainees are not known to have been charged with any offence. It is not clear whether they are still held.

Those executed on 10 November 1995 were Saturday Dabee, Nordu Eawo, Daniel Gbokoo, Paul Levura and Felix Nuate, convicted and sentenced on 30 October 1995, and Baribor Bera, Dr Barinem Kiobel, John Kpuinen and Ken Saro-Wiwa, convicted and sentenced on 31 October 1995. They were convicted of murder after unfair trials by a special court.

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