

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Trafigura's toxic legacy in Côte d'Ivoire

Dozens of local residents have told Amnesty International they continue to fear the long-term health impacts of the dumping of toxic waste belonging to multinational oil trader Trafigura in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, exactly eight years ago today.

An Amnesty International research mission has collected heart-rending testimony from the Akouedo community, where the waste was illegally dumped on the night of 19 August 2006. The dumping caused a human and environmental disaster in Abidjan with over 100,000 people seeking medical assistance and substantial decontamination being required.

Eight years later these people continue to have unanswered questions about their environment and the dangers of living there. Amnesty International delegates met people who spoke of the loss they had suffered because of the toxic waste dumping. Women expressed concern for their children, who suffer from ongoing health issues. They want to know why. People are also growing vegetables next to areas where toxic waste was dumped without knowing if it is safe.

Virtually all of those Amnesty International spoke to living in and around the Akouedo dumpsite say they can still smell the toxic waste after heavy rains.

Doctors in the capital told Amnesty International they are concerned that ongoing pollution is causing respiratory problems in children. They said that the government had failed to carry out any official health study of people affected by the dumping.

The United Nations Environmental Programme is due to carry out an audit of the dumpsites later this year. This should confirm if the dumpsites are still contaminated and could provide missing answers as to the content of the toxic waste and ongoing health implications. Amnesty International is urging the Côte d'Ivoire government to make its findings public, as well as to engage residents in the process.

Vital information relating to the clean-up operation and the content of the toxic waste was lost because of the intervening civil war. Trafigura has never disclosed this information despite the ongoing health concerns.

Amnesty International continues to call on the government of Côte d'Ivoire to address the community's long-standing health concerns and to ensure a full and thorough clean-up of all the dumpsites.

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