

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

AI Index: AFR 44/002/2007 (Public)  
News Service No: 013  
22 January 2007

### **Nigeria: Joint statement on ending political violence and human rights abuses as April elections approach**

Today, ninety days before the presidential elections, Amnesty International and Nigerian civil society organizations are launching the "Campaign for Violence-Free Elections", calling for an end to increased political violence and human rights abuses in the country.

The Campaign for Violence Free Elections will release media briefings sixty, thirty and ten days before the elections. These briefings will highlight trends in violence, specific cases, and any action -- or inaction -- by the authorities to address the violence.

As the elections approach, we continue to receive reports of politically related killings, attacks against journalists and human rights defenders and political opposition leaders and supporters.

We have received reports of several cases of political violence in the run-up to the elections, including the assassination of political aspirants and their aides and journalists. The following are but a few examples:

- o On 27 July 2006 PDP candidate for Governor of Lagos State, Chief Funsho Williams, was killed at his home. The police stated that 244 suspects were arrested in connection with his murder, including several of his political associates and personal aides. By early December 35 suspects remained in police custody. The specific charges against those who remained in detention were unclear.
- o On 14 August 2006 Dr. Ayo Daramola, a candidate for Governor in Ekiti State, was shot and stabbed by armed men who forced their way into his home. In October police arrested six young men in connection with the killing. One of the suspects reportedly claimed that he was commissioned by an aide of the then Ekiti State Governor to kill Ayo Daramola. The other suspects, however, claimed that the motive was robbery.
- o In November 2006, several bomb attacks, allegedly politically motivated, were carried out in Bayelsa, Delta and Edo States, killing at least one person.

We are seriously concerned that increased and widespread violence has left dozens dead in clashes between supporters of rival candidates and seen several political candidates assassinated. Violence and serious human rights abuses have become the hallmark of Nigeria elections. Political parties and candidates are reportedly involved in the violence, arming supporters and inciting violent clashes.

Political violence is used by most parties to the elections as a means to retain or acquire political power or support. We are seriously concerned that the Nigerian Government is doing very little to prevent widespread political violence, including killings, threats, intimidations and other serious human rights violations in the context of the elections.

We are also concerned by the failure of the relevant authorities to investigate and bring to justice the suspected perpetrators.

We therefore call on all the stakeholders, including the President, the state and federal governments, political parties and candidates to publicly declare that they will not tolerate violence and human rights abuses before and after the elections. We further call:

- o For an end to continuing political violence and human rights abuses during and after the elections, including acts of political violence, killings, threats, intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention of human rights defenders, civil society activists, journalists and political opposition leaders and candidates.
- o For independent, transparent and effective investigations into cases of political violence and human rights abuses in the context of the elections, and for suspected perpetrators to be brought to justice without further delay.
- o On all governmental and inter-governmental bodies sending election monitors to Nigeria to ensure that they monitor and report on human rights abuses. We further call on them to ensure that election monitors are trained in

human rights monitoring and that they fully take the human rights context into account. The monitors must be given access to all areas of the country and focus particular attention on the right to freedom of expression, association and assembly as well as the conduct of law enforcement officials, and the security for all candidates and supporters.

- o On election monitors to remain in the country after the elections to be able to monitor and report the aftermath of the elections.
- o Political parties and candidates to make anti-violence campaigns a clear and integral part of their elections campaign.
- o On the government not to use the police and other law enforcement agencies as political tools to harass or intimidate opposition candidates and supporters during and after the elections.
- o On the police and other law enforcement agencies not to use excessive force, particularly in policing demonstration or rallies.
- o On the government to take appropriate action to ensure that police and other law enforcement officials who are suspected of having committed serious human rights violations are suspended from duty pending an investigation into these violations.

Signed,

Access to Justice  
Amnesty International  
Baobab For Women Human Rights  
Campaign for Accountable Governance through Elections (CAGE)  
Centre for Constitutionalism & Demilitarisation (CENCOD)  
Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD)  
Civil Liberty Organisation (CLO)  
Cleen Foundation  
Concerned Professionals  
Constitutional Rights Project (CRP)  
Gender and Development Action (GADA)  
Human Development Initiatives  
Human Rights Law Services (HURI – LAWs)  
Independent Advocacy Project (IAP)  
International Press Centre  
Kudirat Initiative for Democracy (KIND)  
Legal Defence and Assistance Project (LEDAP)  
Legal Research and Resource Development Centre  
Legal Resources Consortium (LRC)  
Media Rights Agenda (MRA)  
National Association of Democratic Lawyers  
Project Alert on Violence Against Women  
Rural Women Empowerment Network (RUWEN)  
Socio-Economic Rights & Accountability Project (SERAP)  
Social and Economic Rights Action Center (SERAC)  
West African Bar Association (WABA)  
West African Network for Peace Building Nigeria (WANEP)  
Women Advocates Research & Documentation Centre (WARDC)