

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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## **Nigeria: Odioma - One year after: fears of continuing human rights violations**

On the one-year anniversary of the Joint Task Force raid on the community of Odioma, Bayelsa State, which resulted in at least 17 people being killed, acts of torture including rape of women, Amnesty International fears that human rights violations by the military present in the community are continuing.

Recent reports obtained by Amnesty International suggest that members of the security forces who are still based in Odioma are committing human rights violations, especially committing acts of violence against women including rape.

Nobody has yet been brought to justice for the human rights violations committed by the security forces.

Amnesty International is reiterating its concerns that the report of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry, which was reportedly handed over to the former State Governor of Bayelsa State in June 2005, has not yet been made public. The state government should make the report public and easily accessible without further delay. In order that human rights are upheld and to show its serious commitment to the protection of the human rights of its citizens, the authorities must bring those suspected of having committed human rights violations to justice in accordance with international standards of fair trial and without recourse to the death penalty. Victims of human rights violations and their families should be guaranteed the right to an effective remedy and reparation, which includes compensation, rehabilitation, restitution, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition.

Amnesty International also urges the federal government to ensure that the security forces in all its operations respect fundamental human rights as enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution as well as in international and regional human rights treaties to which Nigeria is a party. Furthermore, in their conducts, all law enforcement officials should strictly adhere to the United Nations Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials.

### **Background**

On 19 February 2005 members of the Joint Task Force raided Odioma ostensibly on a mission to reduce tension between communities and to seek out and arrest youths who allegedly killed 12 community members, including four councillors, earlier in 2005. The security forces reportedly used excessive force against community members, including using machine guns at community members who they claimed were shooting at them when they arrived. The security forces also reportedly set houses on fire by soaking

clothes with petrol and throwing them into the houses.

The deplorable conduct of security forces documented by Amnesty International includes incidents such as in the demonstration by Ugborodo community members at the Escravos oil terminal, Delta State, in February 2005, Zaki-Biam in Benue State, in 2001 and Odi in Bayelsa State, in 1999, where they have been called in to deal with clashes and where their actions have included excessive use of force and unlawful killings. Amnesty International is concerned that human rights violations, in which the Nigerian security forces have been implicated, have often not been investigated and, as a result, suspected perpetrators have not been brought to justice.