



OPEN LETTER

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15 September 2020

H.E. President Muhammadu Buhari
President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

Your Excellency,

Open letter on Addressing the toll of Northeast Nigeria's Conflict on Children

Amnesty International is writing to call on your government to ensure all children detained in Giwa Barracks, Kainji military base, Maiduguri Maximum Prison, the Operation Safe Corridor facility outside Gombe, and other detention facilities associated with the conflict in Northeast Nigeria are immediately released, or are only detained as a very last resort and held in humane conditions in a civilian facility. We urge you to use your authority and influence, as the President and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces, to ensure the immediate release of these children and to ensure they can have access to education and psychosocial support.

On 27 May 2020, Amnesty International published a report: *We Dried Our Tears: Addressing the toll on children of Northeast Nigeria's conflict* (AFR 44/2322/2020). The report highlights how the military's widespread unlawful detention and torture have compounded the suffering of children from Borno and Adamawa States who faced war crimes and crimes against humanity at the hands of Boko Haram. Amnesty International reiterates its call for the federal government of Nigeria, with the co-operation of Adamawa and Borno State governments, to investigate the unlawful detention, torture and the reports of deaths and injuries of children in custody of the Nigerian military. The findings of the investigation must be made public; and those suspected of human rights violations should be prosecuted before Nigerian civilian courts, in accordance with international fair trial standards and without recourse to the death penalty.

The government of Nigeria has obligations to promote and protect the rights of all children. We urge you to:

- Immediately release all children held in Giwa, Kainji, Maiduguri Maximum Prison, Safe Corridor, and other detention facilities, unless they have reached the minimum age of criminal responsibility as recognized under international law; are reasonably suspected of having committed an internationally recognizable offence; are remanded by an independent, civilian

court that has given primary consideration to the best interests of the child; and are held in humane conditions in a civilian facility;

- Ensure all detainees are promptly brought before an independent, civilian court where they are represented by counsel and have the opportunity to challenge their detention;

- Take immediate steps to ensure children are only detained as a very last resort and where all alternatives have been considered and found inapplicable, in line with Nigerian and international human rights law;

- Ensure that conditions of detention in all places where people, and especially children, are deprived of liberty are humane, and in strict adherence with international law and standards;

- Ensure anyone detained can exercise rights to health care, adequate food and water, and all other necessities, as well as the right to have access to the outside world, including their families, also taking into account children's distinct needs, including the distinct needs of girls;

- Ensure that an up-to-date, centralized register is maintained of all people arrested and detained in relation to the conflict and is made accessible to detainees' relatives and lawyers. The register must include detainees' personal details; the names and places of detention; the names of individuals responsible for the detention; the basis of the detention; and the date of arrest, detention, and transfers. Include, for those who died in custody, the date, location, and cause of death;

- Immediately close all unofficial and secret places of detention, including ungazetted military detention centres, and other facilities where there is a pattern of inhumane conditions and/or failures to ensure procedural protections against arbitrary detention and torture and other ill-treatment. Either release such detainees or promptly bring them before an independent, civilian court;

Amnesty International looks forward to your action to ensure that all individuals suspected of having committed crimes and other serious human rights violations against children, including children in detention, are investigated and, where there is sufficient evidence, prosecuted before civilian courts, in fair trials not subject to the death penalty.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely,

Osai Ojigbo
Country Director