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Netherlands: Shell case shows justice is possible

A decision by a Dutch court today relating to Shell's liability for pollution in the Niger Delta shows that justice is possible – but is extremely hard to achieve if you are taking on a massive multinational, Amnesty International said.

“Clearly it's good news that one of the plaintiffs in this case managed to clamber over all the obstacles to something approaching justice,” said Amnesty International's Africa programme director Audrey Gaughran.

“The court found Shell had a duty of care when it comes to preventing tampering with its pipelines.

“However, the fact that the other plaintiffs' claims were dismissed underscores the very serious obstacles people from the Niger Delta face in accessing justice when their lives have been destroyed by oil pollution.

“Given the really serious difficulties of bringing these cases at all, the significance of today's ruling is that one plaintiff prevailed and will get damages.

“It is clear that governments need to look at the formidable obstacles claimants face especially when taking massive oil companies to court.”

Amnesty International has documented widespread oil pollution in the Niger Delta that seriously undermines the human rights of the people there.