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Death row inmates moved closer to the gallows in Nigeria

Amnesty International has received worrying reports that Nigerian prison authorities on Tuesday moved a group of death row prisoners into cells closer to the gallows, including one man who narrowly escaped execution last month.

“With these latest reports it appears that the authorities at Nigeria’s Benin prison may be gearing up to continue executing,” said Lucy Freeman, Deputy Director of Amnesty International’s Africa Programme.

“In a cruel twist, one of the men who have just been moved within the prison was also amongst those brought to the gallows to be hanged last month, before the prison authorities postponed his execution after realizing his death sentence required a firing squad.

“Many countries in West Africa and most of the world are moving away from the death penalty, but Nigeria insists on bucking this clear international trend – President Goodluck Jonathan must call for an end to all executions in the country and return to the moratorium that was previously in place.”

While it is believed that execution warrants have been signed for the men, further appeals are pending in relation to their cases.

Benin Prison, where the men are being held in the southern Nigerian state of Edo, executed four prisoners exactly one month ago, on 24 June. They were the country’s first known judicial executions since 2006.

Amnesty International is attempting to confirm reports that Edo State Governor signed two additional execution warrants on Wednesday morning.

According to the organization’s [*Death Sentences and Executions 2012*](#) report, Nigeria sentenced 56 people to death last year, and approximately 1,000 people are on death row in the country.