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Nigeria: Police ‘disappear’ four in Port Harcourt

Amnesty International today warned that police in the Niger Delta region are increasingly using illegal and violent means to tackle suspected militants and criminals in the area – including enforced disappearances, torture, and illegal killings.

“We are seeing what appears to be a worrying rise in the use of extreme violence by the police in the Niger Delta – despite reported government suggestions of a gun amnesty as a way of trying to resolve some of the serious problems that have been plaguing the region for years,” said Aster van Kregten, Amnesty International’s Nigeria researcher.

On 7 April, Chika Ibeku, a former member of the Deewell, a criminal gang in the Niger Delta, was arrested by police and then held by the Swift Operation Squad (SOS) in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, with three other unnamed men. The four men are now missing.

Amnesty International is concerned that they may have been tortured and killed by the police.

The Port Harcourt police deny any knowledge of the four men.

Today, Amnesty International, along with several other international and Nigerian organizations, issued a public statement of concern for the safety of Chika Ibeku and the three men.

“We are calling on the Nigerian police to publicly confirm the arrest and detention of Chika Ibeku and the three others and immediately disclose their fate and whereabouts,” said Aster van Kregten.

According to information received by Amnesty International, prior to his arrest, Chika Ibeku had surrendered his guns to the police following the recent reports about an amnesty for militants in the Niger Delta.

Chika Ibeku was initially detained at Omoko Police station, where he was last seen by family members on the morning of Wednesday 8 April 2009. His family was then informed by SOS officers that they were holding him at their detention centre, Old GRA, in Port Harcourt. His family and lawyers were denied access to him. On Sunday, 12 April, officers at the SOS centre denied any knowledge of Chika Ibeku’s whereabouts.

“The police’s refusal to disclose the whereabouts of Chika Ibeku is deeply troubling – especially in light of the history of torture and unlawful killings by the police in the Niger Delta region,” said Aster van Kregten. “This amounts to an enforced disappearance – a method usually used to cover up gross human rights violations, such as torture and murder.”

To see a copy of the joint public statement, Nigeria: Enforced disappearances in Port Harcourt, please click [here](#).

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