

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Extrajudicial executions / Fear for safety

27 June 1994

NIGERIA

Members of the Ogoni ethnic group

Since 21 May 1994 more than 50 members of the Ogoni ethnic group are reported to have been extrajudicially executed and over 180 others wounded during attacks by the security forces on Ogoni villages in Rivers State, southeast Nigeria.

The attacks are believed to be continuing and there are fears that many more members of the Ogoni community may become victims of extrajudicial executions.

Amnesty International is calling for urgent measures to halt the killings and to protect all members of the Ogoni community.

The security forces are reported to have attacked some 30 villages, firing at random, destroying and looting property and setting fire to homes. According to reports, the village of Uegwere Bo-ue was attacked twice within four days.

On 4 June, four people were shot, two of whom died. During a second attack on 8 June, seven people were killed, including a 10-year-old boy. Some of the victims are reported to have died after their homes were set ablaze by soldiers. In the village of Buan, a pregnant women, Leyira Piri, is reported to have been shot dead; six others were critically wounded. Other villages attacked are reported to include Yeghe on 1 June where two people were shot dead and Okwali on 12 June where five people killed and several others critically wounded.

These latest extrajudicial executions have occurred since the presence of security forces in Ogoniland was intensified following the murder on 21 May 1994 of four leading members of the Ogoni community by a group of youths at a meeting in Giokoo. Ostensibly searching for those directly responsible for the murders, the security forces have indiscriminately arrested members of the Ogoni community; reports suggest that several hundred are being held either at Bori Military Camp in Port Harcourt or at Kpor in Ogoniland. Some are reported to have been released after the extortion of large amounts of money by soldiers.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Ogoni community has been campaigning against environmental damage and inadequate compensation for destruction of land and crops by oil companies operating in Ogoniland. In April 1993 security forces were reported to have opened fire on peaceful demonstrators in Biara; 11 people were injured. Shortly afterwards, further shootings at Nonwa resulted in one death.

Since 1993 the security forces are alleged to have been responsible for a number of extrajudicial executions after being brought into Ogoniland to maintain order. Although hundreds of Ogoni were reportedly killed in intercommunal fighting, there is evidence implicating the security forces. An official inquiry into some of these killings has not made its findings public (see UA 176/94, AFR 44/02/94, 4 May 1994).

The President of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), Ken Saro-Wiwa, was arrested on 22 May 1994 in connection with the incident which resulted in the latest attacks by the security forces on the Ogoni people.

Although accused of inciting youths to murder the four Ogoni leaders on 21 May 1994, it is not clear whether he has been formally charged. Amnesty International believes that the accusations against him are unfounded, that

he has neither used nor advocated violence and that his most recent detention, as on several occasions in the past, is solely because of his campaign on behalf of the Ogoni people (see UA 200/94, AFR 44/03/94, 24 May 1994, and AFR 44/07/94, 27 June 1994).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/express and airmail letters either in English or in your own language:

- expressing concern about reports that more than 50 members of the Ogoni ethnic group have been extrajudicially executed by members of the Nigerian security forces since 21 May 1994 during attacks on their villages;
- calling for immediate measures to be taken to protect the Ogoni people from further attacks;
- calling for a thorough and impartial investigation into these and all other reports of extrajudicial executions by the security forces in Rivers State in 1993 and 1994, for its findings to be made public and for those found responsible to be brought to justice in accordance with international standards.

APPEALS TO:

Telexes: (for appeal addresses 1-3): [0905] 91529 or 91530 EXTNAL NG (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

1. General Sani Abacha
Chairman, Provisional Ruling Council,
Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces and Minister of Defence
State House, Abuja
Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria
Telegrams: General Abacha, Abuja, Nigeria
Salutation: Dear General Abacha

2. Dr Olu Onagoruwa
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Ministry of Justice
Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria
Telegrams: Minister of Justice Onagoruwa, Abuja, Nigeria
Salutation: Dear Minister

3. Lt-Gen D.O. Diya
Chief of General Staff
State House, Abuja
Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria
Telegrams: Chief of Staff Diya, Abuja, Nigeria
Salutation: Dear Lieutenant-General Diya

4. Lt-Col Dauda M. Komo
State Military Administrator
Government House
91000 Port Harcourt
Rivers State, Nigeria
Telegrams; Administrator Komo, Government House, Rivers State, Nigeria
Salutation: Dear Administrator

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

The Editor, *The Guardian*, PMB 1217, Oshodi, Lagos, Nigeria
The Editor, *National Concord*, POB 4483, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria

The Editor, *The Punch*, PMB 21204, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria

The Editor, *Nigerian Tide*, PMB 5072, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

The Editor, *Point*, 222 Aba Road, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

The Editor, *Weekly Sunray*, 220 Aba Road, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

and to diplomatic representatives of Nigeria accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 8 August 1994.