

# URGENT ACTION

## HUNDREDS FORCIBLY EVICTED IN ABUJA

**Hundreds of people were forcibly evicted from their homes in an informal settlement in Abuja, Nigeria. The settlement was burnt down by a government task force and at least one person was killed.**

Hundreds of people were forcibly evicted from their homes and at least one person died when the Task Force on Environmental Sanitation, accompanied by armed police and soldiers, burnt down structures in Panteka settlement and market. The task force was set up "to rid Abuja of slums and prevent unlawful activities and traffic congestion, street begging, hawking as well as illegal structures within the Abuja metropolis". The task force have announced their intention to carry out more of these operations over the next three weeks.

The task force arrived at the settlement in Apo district, Abuja, on 25 June and began setting fire to the structures. According to residents, police shot in the air and arrested people as they tried to run away. Residents told Amnesty International that Abu-Bakr Muhammad Abdullahi, a shoe shine, was burnt to death whilst in his house. A spokesperson for the Abuja Environmental Protection Board (AEPB) confirmed one person died from "smoke inhalation and other things". According to residents, a further two people died, including a woman, Blessing Christopher. AEPB deny this.

Residents claim they were not given adequate notice of the operation or given time to pack their belongings. Residents told Amnesty International that only 5 days notice was given to the Chairman of the community but they arrived for the demolition on the third day. One resident told Amnesty International "Environmental come, they just put fire.... I have no clothes, only what I'm wearing. This trouser and shirt is all I have now."

According to a representative of the AEPB, notice was given to the chairman of the community several times since January 2011. He told Amnesty International the community were given several dates for the demolition and "that's why they were not sure we were coming that day [Saturday]."

### **Please write immediately in English or your own language:**

- Calling on the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Permanent Secretary to urgently stop all forced evictions
- Calling on the FCT Permanent Secretary to suspend future evictions planned by the task force, until adequate safeguards are in place to prevent forced evictions and to ensure that all evictions comply with regional and international human rights standards;
- Ensure residents of Panteka community are provided with effective remedies, including adequate alternative housing and compensation for all losses;
- Immediately provide temporary housing to people whose homes were burnt and emergency relief, as necessary, including food, water and health care services
- Fully investigate the circumstances surrounding the death of at least one person, but possibly up to three persons; the findings of the investigation should be made public

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 30/7/2011:**

FCTA Permanent Secretary,  
Dr. Biodun Nathaniel Olorunfemi  
Federal Capital Territory Administration  
(FCTA),  
Area 11, Garki Abuja,  
FCT PMB 24 Nigeria

Director of inspection and Monitoring in  
the FCT,  
Mrs. Jumai Kwanashie  
Federal Capital Territory Administration  
(FCTA),  
Area 11, Garki Abuja,  
FCT PMB 24 Nigeria

### **And copies to:**

Minister of Works, Housing and Urban  
Development  
Federal Ministry of Works, Housing and  
Urban Development  
9th Floor, federal Secretariat Towers  
Shehu, Shangari Way  
Abuja, Nigeria

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:**

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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## HEADLINE

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The sanitation and environmental task force returned to Panteka (commonly referred to as Tora Bora) on Monday 27 June 2011, accompanied by approximately 15 armed police officers. They chased away residents and continued to burn any remaining structures as well as salvaged materials that had been collected by residents. Amnesty International visited the site and spoke to displaced residents trying to salvage what little they could from the scorched remains of their shops and homes. Amnesty International witnessed the return of the task force on that day. Smoke could be seen rising from the community for several hours.

The Task Force on Environmental and Sanitation is a joint task force established by the permanent secretary of the Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA), and chaired by the Director of Inspection and Monitoring in the FCT. The members include the AEPB; Department of Development Control; National Drugs Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA); the police; and the military.

A spokesperson for the AEPB told Amnesty International “There has been a security threat for quite some time, [there was] a bomb blast.... there are criminal activities. So we are trying to clean the city to be free of miscreants, destitute and beggars... The hideouts of drug addicts and criminals... we are clearing them and ensuring a clean environment... The issue is to ensure the hideout of criminals is flushed out, and gangs and drugs [are flushed out].”

Nigeria is obliged under a range of human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, to refrain from and prevent forced evictions. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has emphasized that evictions may be carried out only as a last resort, once all other feasible alternatives have been explored and only after appropriate procedural and legal safeguards are in place. These include genuine consultation with the affected people, prior adequate and reasonable notice, adequate alternative housing and compensation for all losses, safeguards on how evictions are carried out, and access to legal remedies and procedures, including access to legal aid where necessary. Governments are also required to ensure that no one is rendered homeless or vulnerable to other human rights violations as a consequence of an eviction. These requirements apply to all evictions, regardless of the tenure status of residents, including those living in informal settlements.

Chapter 2 of Nigeria’s 1999 Constitution, Section 16 (2) (d) directs the state to ensure that suitable, adequate shelter is provided for all citizens. However, as with other provisions on social and economic rights, this falls within the Constitution’s “directive principles”. As such, it is not justiciable and therefore remains unenforceable in Nigeria’s courts. Provisions of Chapter 4 of the Constitution do guarantee the right to acquire a home and the right to privacy of the home.

Under the Land Use Act (1978) it is lawful to revoke the right of occupancy where it serves the greater public interest. The Act provides for the payment of compensation and, in the case of residential buildings, for the option of relocation. Forced evictions are not prohibited under Nigerian law, nor is the right to adequate housing legislated.

The Federal Capital Territory Administration (FCTA) was established in 1979 and is responsible for planning and development, and the allocation of urban and rural areas within FCT. Thousands of people have been forcibly evicted from their homes in Abuja since 2000 as part of the implementation of the Abuja Master Plan, which seeks among other things to ‘beautify’ the city. Since 2000, over two million people have been forcibly evicted from their homes in different parts of Nigeria. According to a 2006 report by Nigerian NGO Social Economic Rights Action Centre, more than 70% of Abuja’s residents live in informal settlements due to the high cost of rent in the central area.

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