

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: AFR 44/012/2009
16 April 2009

Nigeria: Enforced Disappearances in Port Harcourt

Amnesty International, the Nigerian Bar Association Human Rights Institute (NBAHRI) and Nigerian NGOs are concerned for the safety of Mr Chika Ibeku who was arrested on 7 April 2009 by the Nigerian police and subsequently detained by the Swift Operation Squad (SOS) in Old GRA, Port Harcourt, Rivers State. His whereabouts and those of three others are now unknown. The undersigned organisations fear that the men were tortured and may have been executed.

The organisations call on the Nigeria Police Force to publicly confirm the arrest and detention of Mr Chika Ibeku and immediately disclose his fate and whereabouts.

Mr Ibeku is believed to have been a member of the *Deewell*, a criminal gang. According to Mr Ibeku's family, Ibeku had surrendered his guns to the police, following the recent reports of an amnesty for militants in the Niger Delta. On 7 April 2009 he was arrested and detained at Omoko Police station.

He was last seen by family members on the morning of Wednesday 8 April 2009. Mr Ibeku was then taken to the Swift Operation Squad (SOS) centre, Old GRA, Port Harcourt, Rivers state. On Thursday 9 April, police officers at the Swift Operation Squad confirmed to Mr Ibeku's family that Mr Ibeku had been arrested and was being held at the SOS centre; however his family members and lawyers were refused access to him. On Sunday 12 April 2009, officers at the SOS centre denied any knowledge of the whereabouts of Mr Ibeku.

The refusal of police authorities to disclose the whereabouts of Chika Ibeku is deeply troubling. The organisations note with great concern the history of extra-judicial executions, torture and other ill-treatment in Nigeria. The organizations fear that Chika Ibeku and the three others were the victims of enforced disappearances.

Background

Enforced disappearances are crimes under international law. Enforced disappearances are a violation of Nigeria's constitutional and international human rights obligations, including the right to security and dignity of person; the right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; the right to humane conditions of detention; the right to a legal personality; right to a fair trial; and when the disappeared person is killed, the right to life.

An enforced disappearance is the arrest, detention, abduction or any other form of deprivation of liberty by agents of the State (or by persons or groups of persons acting with the authorization, support or acquiescence of the State), followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation of liberty or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person, which place such a person outside the protection of the law..

Signed:

Access to Justice
Amnesty International
Bodo Youth Federation
Centre for Development, Constitutionalism and Peace Advocacy (CD-COPA)
Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD)
Centre for the Rule of Law

Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR)
Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC)
Centre for Law Enforcement Education (CLEEN)
Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO)
Constitutional Rights Project
Human Rights, Justice and Peace Foundation
HURILAWS (HRLS)
Journalists Committee for Media Rights and Democracy (JCMRD)
Legal Defence and Assistance Project (LEDAP)
Nigerian Bar Association Human Rights Institute
Nigerian Humanist Movement
Partnership for Justice
Prisoners Rehabilitation and Welfare Action (PRAWA)
Rivers Coalition
Socio-Economic Rights & Accountability Project (SERAP)

END/