

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Nigeria urged to end the use of excessive force and mass forced evictions 5 years after the Bundu shooting

Sunday 12 October 2014 marks the five year anniversary of the Bundu shooting that left at least one person dead and 12 seriously injured in Port Harcourt. The excessive use of force seen in the Bundu shooting is just one of many examples of the brutality with which the police and army operate throughout Nigeria and that still continues today.

Amnesty International is calling on Nigerian authorities to end the use of excessive force by repealing regulations not in line with international human rights standards. Amnesty International is also calling for Nigeria to adopt a federal level moratorium on mass evictions until adequate legal and procedural safeguards are in place.

On 12 October 2009, armed security forces opened fire on a crowd of people in Bundu Ama peacefully protesting against the proposed demolition of their homes. The government refused to undertake an inquiry into the incident and initially even denied anything had taken place.

A case was eventually brought by 10 residents belonging to the Bundu waterfront and surrounding communities and the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) against the Federal and Rivers state government. On 12 June 2014, the Community Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) ruled that there was no justification for the shootings and that the Nigerian government had breached its obligation to protect and respect the right to peaceful association and assembly. The court

awarded a total of 11 million Nigerian Naira – nearly \$70,000 USD - in damages. Article 15(4) of the ECOWAS Treaty makes the Judgment of the Court binding on Member States, including Nigeria.

Although Amnesty International welcomes the judgment - which is a testament to the will of the community to stand up for their rights - the fact remains that Nigeria's police regulations are not yet in line with international standards on the use of force and firearms. Principle 9 of the UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials makes clear that firearms can only be used in very limited circumstances, when there exists a grave or imminent threat of death or serious injury and when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life. Nigeria's Constitution and Police Force Order 237 (rules for guidance in use of firearms by the police) provide much broader grounds for the use of lethal force than is permissible under international standards.

Moreover, forced evictions continue to be a serious human rights problem in Nigeria. Since 2000, more than two million people have been forcibly evicted from their homes in different parts of the country and hundreds of thousands more continue to be at risk.