

# URGENT ACTION

## FATHER OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER ATTACKED

**Oliver Igwe, the 77-year-old father of Nigerian human rights defender Leo Igwe, was attacked in his home by unidentified men, causing him to lose an eye. The police have refused to investigate the incident, which is believed to be linked to the Igwe family's campaign for justice for a rape survivor. The family is at risk of further reprisals if the authorities do not protect them.**

At around midnight on 4 August, two unidentified men entered Oliver Igwe's home in Imo State, southern Nigeria. They blindfolded the elderly man and attacked him with stones, causing extensive injuries to his face and head. Oliver Igwe had to have his eye removed by doctors on 11 August, and is recovering in hospital. His wife, who was at home during the attack and had just undergone heart surgery, was unhurt. Their home was ransacked and valuables were stolen. The police were informed of the incident but did not come to the couple's home and have so far refused to open an investigation, telling Leo Igwe to send a formal written request for them to investigate the attack.

Since January 2007, the Igwe family have been campaigning for access to justice for a girl who was raped in 2006, when she was 10 years old. Amnesty International believes that the attack on Oliver Igwe is the latest in a series of incidents intended to force the family to stop their campaign on behalf of the girl.

Since the beginning of their campaign for justice for the girl, there have been numerous petitions to the police seeking the arrest of members of the Igwe family and the girl's family, and several civil suits have been filed in court. The police and State Security Services (SSS) have invited or arrested, detained and questioned members of the Igwe family on a number of different occasions. The Igwe family and the girl's family have been repeatedly invited to visit police stations, where they were often detained for several hours. The Igwe family say that since 2007 they have paid the police over 100,000 Naira (equivalent to US\$664), for 'bail'. However, bail in Nigeria is paid to the courts, not to the police.

Amnesty International believes that the attack on Oliver Igwe and repeated legal harassment of the Igwe family are intended to intimidate and threaten Leo Igwe, his family and witnesses and to distract attention from the rape case.

### **PLEASE WRITE IMMEDIATELY in English or your own language:**

- Urging the police to immediately open an investigation into the attack against Oliver Igwe on 4 August, with the results made public and those responsible brought to justice;
- Calling on the police to take immediate action to protect the Igwe family from threats and harassment, in accordance with the wishes of those at risk;
- Calling on the police to investigate the continuing harassment of the Igwe family.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 24 SEPTEMBER 2010 TO:**

#### Commissioner

The Police Commissioner of Imo State  
Imo State Police Command  
Owerri  
Imo State  
Nigeria

**Salutation: Dear Commissioner**

#### **And copies to:**

Divisional Police Officer (DPO)  
Ahiazu Mbaise Police Station  
Afororu town  
Ahiazu Mbaise Local Government Area (LGA)  
Imo state  
Nigeria

**Salutation: Dear Divisional Police Officer**

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives of Nigeria accredited to your country.** Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In 2007, Leo Igwe, a human rights defender and President of the Nigerian Humanist Society, wrote several letters to the police expressing his concern that the rape of a 10-year-old girl in 2006 was not being investigated, and claiming that the girl, her family and other members of their community were being intimidated in connection with the case.

Since 2007, Oliver Igwe has been invited or arrested, detained and interviewed at least nine times at three different police stations. Leo Igwe and his three brothers have been invited or arrested, interviewed and detained at least four times.

Article 1 of the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms states “Everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to promote and to strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels.” Article 3( c) guarantees the right to “offer and provide professionally qualified legal assistance or other relevant advice and assistance in defending human rights and fundamental freedoms”.

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