

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

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Nigeria elections: Failure to protect human rights raises death toll

Amnesty International today urged the Nigerian government to ensure that human rights are effectively upheld and protected, after violence during the state assembly and state governorship elections on 14 April left up to 50 people dead.

Nigerians will vote in presidential and national assembly elections on 21 April. The organization is concerned that, unless effective measures are taken immediately, the number of victims will greatly increase.

In failing to prevent, investigate and punish perpetrators of these attacks, the Nigerian authorities are failing in their duty under international law and standards to exercise due diligence to protect the victims' right to life and security of person. Moreover, they are also failing in their duty to protect the right of all Nigerians to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives, as well as their right to vote and to be elected.

Amnesty International has already documented cases of politically motivated attacks, killings, threats and intimidation targeting political candidates and their supporters in the run-up to the elections. On 12 April Amnesty International published a report, *Nigeria: Impunity for political violence in the run-up to the 2007 elections* (AI Index: AFR 44/004/2007).

The pattern of political violence and the failure of the authorities to investigate these incidents and bring the perpetrators to justice has created a climate of impunity which can only encourage further election violence in Amnesty International's view.

Amnesty International is calling on the current and future political leaders of Nigeria to seize this historical opportunity to take up their responsibility by ensuring no tolerance of human rights abuses.

Background

Violence around the 14 April elections left 21 people dead according to the police. Local human rights organisations however put the death toll at 50.

Following the elections on 14 April, a number of cases of political killings, intimidation and attacks on voters and officers of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) occurred. In different incidents in the Niger Delta, political supporters and armed groups reportedly attacked national and international journalists as they tried to cover the elections.

In Bayelsa State, four politicians from the Brass local government area were reportedly killed: on 12 April, a People's Democratic Party (PDP) chieftain was reportedly shot and on 13 April, three other local PDP

politicians, a chairmanship candidate, a former councillor and a woman PDP leader, were shot to death.

On 15 April, four armed men opened fire on a group of people in the premises of a governorship candidate in Makurdi, Benue State, killing one of the candidate's aides.