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Nigeria: Government fails women and girls raped by police and security forces

"There were three men. I have pain even today... they used my daughter too. She is 12 years old... They also raped my sister. Another man raped a woman who was 4 months pregnant and she lost the child...they were military men. Everyone in the village saw them, they didn't hide, they didn't care. I didn't tell the police because I fear them."

Rape by police and security forces is endemic in Nigeria as is the abject failure of the Nigerian authorities to bring perpetrators to justice, Amnesty International said today at a press conference in Lagos, Nigeria.

The organisation called on the Nigerian Federal and State authorities to urgently overhaul the legal and social systems that tolerate widespread rape and sexual violence against women and girls across the country.

Amnesty International launched a report, *Nigeria: Rape - the silent weapon*, which draws upon the testimony of survivors and identifies disturbing trends of rape and sexual violence against women and girls at the hands of police and security forces. The report argues that these acts are compounded and encouraged by failures at every level of the judicial system and persist because of consistent failure by the state to tackle the abuse of women and girls by the police and security forces.

Whether abused by police, security forces or in their homes and community, the report outlines the enormous difficulties faced by women and girls who are raped or sexually abused in Nigeria.

"The harsh reality is that if you are a woman or a girl in Nigeria who has suffered the terrible experience of being raped your suffering is likely to be met with intimidation by the police, indifference from the state and the knowledge that the perpetrator is unlikely to ever face justice," said Kolawole Olaniyan, Africa Director at Amnesty International.

Among the findings presented at the press conference:

- Evidence of the use of rape and sexual slavery by the Nigerian security forces to intimidate communities in the Niger Delta

- How rape is used by the police as a means of torture to extract confessions from suspects in custody

- How women and girls rarely seek prosecution for fear of intimidation by the police and rejection by their families and community. When they do, widespread failures throughout the judicial system result in only an estimated 10% of cases ever being successfully prosecuted.

The report outlines serious obstacles to the reporting and prosecution of rape in Nigeria, including inadequate training of police that results in the humiliation and intimidation of the victims and police investigations hampered by corruption and incompetence. On the legislative level, differences between federal, state, Sharia and customary law lead to uneven standards of justice and arbitrary decisions concerning the seriousness of the crime.

“Our report depicts the near total failure of the Nigerian state to protect women and girls from these terrible crimes. The Nigerian government has taken no meaningful action to translate its international legal obligations towards woman and girls into national law, policy and practice. It is now time that the state and federal authorities meet those obligations and offer real security and justice to women and girls in Nigeria,” Kolawole Olaniyan said.

Notes to Editors

Press conference held at the Sheraton Hotel, Lagos, Nigeria on 28 November 2006, 11.00 (local time)

The report will be available on this link from 28 November 2006:

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engaf440202006>

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