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Nigeria faces many human rights challenges: The increasing violence in Northern Nigeria by the militant Islamist group Boko Haram, the confrontation between the indigenous population and settlers in the Plateau state, the struggle against oil pollution and the search for peace and justice in Niger Delta, the respect of basic human rights of Biafran activists in South Eastern Nigeria, the indiscriminate use of violence by security forces, the failure of the justice system and the congestion of prisons.

1. The Militant Islamist Group Boko Haram

1.1 The militant Islamist group Boko Haram has been widening its terror campaign in 2012/13, including attacks on churches, schools, markets, restaurants, police stations und suicide bombings. At least 3.000 people have been killed since the group has started its violent campaign in July 2009. In the first two months of 2013 some 228 people became victims of this terror campaign and died in suicide bombings or armed confrontations between the security forces and the militant group.

1.2 Society for Threatened Peoples is deeply concerned about the expansion of Boko Haram's area of operation. Being largely confined to Nigeria's North eastern states in 2011, suicide bombings since 2012 have been occurring in all states of Nigeria, even in the highly secured capital Abuja. This is an extremely alarming development. The increasing violence has hurt the livelihood of tens of thousands of people in Northern Nigeria, because massive security restrictions have been imposed by the authorities to limit the freedom of movement of all citizens. The livestock trade with neighbouring countries Niger, Cameroon and Chad broke down after the closure of the border. In the city of Maiduguri (Borno state) the state government has banned private and commercial motorbike taxis for fear of new shooting attacks by Islamist bikers. Additionally, small market shops – offering goods in the late evening hours - had to close down for lack of customers after a curfew, starting at 7pm, was imposed by the authorities.

1.3 Boko Haram is targeting and killing people in the Northern states of Nigeria based on their Christian religion and ethnicity. We are deeply concerned about the increasing violence of the Islamist militant group against Igbo people who came as settlers or merchants to Northern Nigeria. The violence has provoked an exodus of Igbo people living in Northern states to the South. The systematic intimidation of Christian worshippers by targeting their churches on Sundays by suicide bombings intends to block religious freedoms for Christians and to incite religious hatred. Boko Haram even has forced Christian men in Maiduguri to convert to Islam on penalty of death. The deliberate attempt by the Islamist militant group to incite religious and ethnic hatred in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society which still not has achieved reconciliation after the genocide in Biafra might be endangering the stability and security in West Africa's most populated state. The massive human rights violations of Boko Haram might constitute crimes against humanity.

2. Violence in Plateau State

2.1 No fewer than 10 members of the same family were hacked to death on February 21, 2013, in Koghum village in District of Jos in the Plateau state. Among the murdered family members was a two month old child. The presumed assailants of Fulani descent earlier had sent a message threatening the settler family that they would be attacked one day if they would not leave the area. The content of the message was brought to notice to the security forces but they failed to ensure the protection of the family. The latest attack is only one of hundreds of incidents which occurred since 1999. At least 4,000 people have lost their lives in the communal violence in Plateau state in the last 13 years. Since the anti-Igbo pogroms in 1966 Jos has experienced a mostly peaceful coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups until the cycle of violence started in 1999. The settler versus indigenous conflict in Plateau state reflects the problem of communal violence which the Government of Nigeria fails to address. Most of the settlers are Muslim and the indigenous population predominantly is Christian, therefore the struggle for land, resources and more political power also has a religious dimension. Unfortunately the authorities have been failing to search for the root causes of the violence and to propose reliable processes of peaceful conflict resolution and mediation. The approach by the authorities is security-oriented and lacks any meaningful political initiatives.

2.2 The lack of credibility of the security forces is one of the main causes of the disastrous security situation in Nigeria. Residents in northern Nigeria have feared the deliberate use of violence by official security forces as much as the terror of Boko Haram. The recent killing of four students of the Nasarawa University by Nigerian army soldiers has caused outrage in the entire country. The students were allegedly killed by soldiers deployed on February 25, 2013, to quell the protest over lack of water on campus. The Nasarawa State House of Assembly and Nigerians human rights organisations have urged an independent inquiry in the tragic incident. According to

estimations every year some 2.500 citizens are become victims of extrajudicial killings by police or army. But unfortunately impunity prevails regularly.

3. Nigerian Justice System

3.1 The failure of the Nigerian justice system is inciting more violence and human rights violations. Tens of thousands of arrested suspects are waiting for years in congested prisons under inhuman conditions for their trials. In the Kuje Prison in Abuja some 429 of the 546 inmates of the prison have been waiting for their trial in February 2013. Some 20 arrested people suspected of supporting Boko Haram have called on the Federal Government to expedite their trials after months of waiting for the implementation of the legal process.

4. Approach towards Biafran activists

4.1 The indiscriminate approach of state security services against Biafran activists has caused outrage among the Igbo population in south eastern Nigeria as well as new tensions. Some 16 activists of the “Movement for the Actualization of the sovereign state of Biafra” (MASSOB) were and 83 others injured as combined teams of army, police and other security services raided the offices of the group in Onitsha (Anambra State) on June 4, 2012. Some 500 people were arrested during the incident; some of them were released later. Deliberate arrests of presumed MASSOB-supporters were registered quite often. On November 5th, 2012, up to 500 members of the “Biafran Zionist Movement” (BZM) were arrested in Enugu. Nobody knows the exact number of detainees who still are imprisoned due to their commitment to the Biafran cause.

4.2 Instead of documenting and remembering the disastrous consequences of the genocide in Biafra (1967-1970) and searching for genuine peace between Igbo and other communities, the Nigerian authorities still criminalize any attempt to highlight the plight of Igbo during and after the genocide. An independent inquiry should investigate the identity of 19 corpses which were floating in Ezu River in January 2013. Some MASSOB officials claimed that nine of dead persons who were dumped in the river, were arrested activists of the Biafran movement. The organisation presented concrete names and details of arrests which are indicating that Biafran activists have been murdered in prison.

5. Oil pollution

5.1 One of the biggest challenges for justice, equality and human rights in Nigeria is to ensure a better protection of indigenous population of the Niger Delta against the disastrous effects of oil pollution. The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) is urging a credible initiative to clean up oil spills in the Niger Delta. Some 20 years after Ogoni people have raised their concern about the dramatic impact of pollution at

the United Nations Human Rights Conference in Vienna, the situation did not improve.

5.2 Shell's Nigerian subsidiary, Shell Petroleum Development of Nigeria Ltd (SPDC) has failed to apply its own regulations, creating massive health and social problems. All state institutions and oil companies, actively involved in extraction in the Delta, have been failing to ensure a better protecting and a better livelihood of the indigenous population in the Delta. Not only Ogoni, but many indigenous communities suffer from marginalization, corruption and a lack of political will of Nigerian politicians and institutions to achieve more justice, transparency and respect of basic human rights in the Niger Delta.