

**AMNESTY
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European Institutions Office

Alojz Peterle

Member of the European Parliament
Chief Observer of the EU Election Observation Mission to Nigeria

Brussels, 25 March 2011
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Dear Mr Peterle,

Monitoring human rights in Nigeria's forthcoming elections

As Nigerians prepare to go to the polls in April, we urge the EU Election Observation Mission (EOM) to Nigeria to ensure human rights monitoring is a key element of their election observation mandate. To assist you in your important role as Chief Observer, we would like to draw your attention to two recent Amnesty International documents prepared in the run-up to the elections. We would be most grateful if you could share these two documents - Briefing for International Election Observers in Nigeria, and "Loss of life, insecurity and impunity in the run-up to Nigeria's elections" – with the observers of the EU EOM.

The ability to exercise the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, freedom of association, and freedom of movement is essential to creating a climate in which people can participate in the election process without fear of intimidation or reprisals.

Hundreds of people have been killed in politically motivated, communal and sectarian violence across Nigeria in the run-up to elections in April 2011. Since July 2010, over 50 people are reported to have died in election-related killings throughout the country; more than 50 have been killed in sectarian violence in and around Maiduguri, Borno State; and, since 24 December 2010, over 200 people have been killed in communal and sectarian violence in Plateau State.

We have received numerous reports of politically motivated assassinations, threats and intimidation targeting political candidates and their supporters, clashes between armed supporters, and excessive use of force, including lethal force, by security forces in recent months. In addition, human rights defenders and journalists, who play a key role in monitoring Nigeria's elections in April, are facing increasing intimidation and harassment. Yet, the Nigerian authorities have failed to bring suspected perpetrators to justice, nor have they taken effective measures to reduce violence in the country.

There have been no general countrywide anti-electoral violence campaigns, no public awareness programmes, and no adequate investigations, prosecution and conviction of those responsible. By failing to take effective measures to stem the tide of violence, the Nigerian authorities are fostering a climate of impunity, and are creating conditions which threaten to escalate violence in the lead-up to April. Allowing perpetrators to commit abuses which are clearly prohibited by law without consequences allows violence and human rights abuses to flourish.

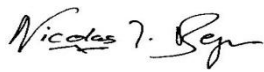
It is essential that election monitoring, in addition to observing the election process itself, takes full account of contextual human rights factors, including during the run-up and in the aftermath of elections. The EU EOM to Nigeria should call on the authorities to halt any human rights violations observed during the duration of its mandate. A human rights assessment should form an integral element of the overall report on the election.

The attached recommendations aim to help election monitors carry out integrated monitoring of elections and human rights. We would appreciate it if you could distribute this briefing to all election observers who are part of the EU EOM to Nigeria, and encourage them to apply the recommendations in their work. Following the election period, we urge you to include observations on human rights abuses in your final report on the Nigerian elections.

Nigerian civil society organisations will also be monitoring the elections. These civil society monitors may be at risk of harassment, intimidation and other abuse for undertaking their activities, or because of their perceived support for opposition parties. We therefore urge the EU EOM to support civil society election monitors and human rights defenders, and devise effective strategies for their protection.

We remain at your disposal for any further information you may require, and would be pleased to meet you in person to discuss these matters further.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Nicolas J. Beger
Director