

**Catherine Ashton**  
High Representative of the Union  
for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy  
Vice President of the European Commission

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



**European Institutions Office**

Brussels, 11 January 2013

Our Ref: B1369

Dear Baroness Ashton,

### **NIGERIAN SECURITY FORCES AND BOKO HARAM RESPONSIBLE FOR VICIOUS CYCLE OF VIOLENCE**

I should like to draw your attention to a new Amnesty International report, *Nigeria: trapped in the cycle of violence* (available [here](#)). It shows how, despite Nigeria's public recognition of the "paramount importance of upholding the rule of law in the fight against terrorism", following the third Nigeria-EU ministerial meeting in February, the security forces continue to commit severe human rights violations in their response to violence by Boko Haram. As a result, people living in northern and central Nigeria are trapped in a vicious cycle of violence created both by Boko Haram and by the security forces that are supposed to protect them.

Boko Haram's violent attacks have claimed more than 1,000 lives since June 2010. The group has killed religious leaders and worshippers, politicians, journalists and lawyers, as well as policemen and soldiers. They have also burned down schools. However, instead of preventing or investigating Boko Haram's attacks effectively, the security forces have responded with their own human rights violations, summarily executing people outside their homes, shooting civilians dead during operations and after arrest, and beating people to death in detention or in the street. They have also carried out forced evictions and house-burning.

What is more, since 2009, the authorities have unlawfully and arbitrarily detained hundreds of people accused of having links to Boko Haram. These detainees are usually not told why they were arrested and they are generally denied medical care and access to a lawyer. Often, they are held incommunicado. Detainees are commonly forced to endure substandard conditions of detention and there are also reports of torture in detention facilities. Judicial review of detentions is either non-existent or ignored. The authorities typically fail to investigate violations perpetrated by the security forces.

Boko Haram is responsible for terrible atrocities, but the Nigerian authorities cannot protect people by violating human rights. In June 2012, you pledged to "work with the [Nigerian] authorities to make the fight against terrorism more effective." As well as continuing to denounce Boko Haram's terrorism, the EU must press Nigeria to develop a counter-terrorism strategy that is consistent with its responsibility to operate within the law and offer the population the law's full protection. In line with the commitment made in the EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy to "place human rights at the centre of...relations with all third countries", we ask the EU to urge the Nigerian authorities to:

- Publicly condemn and prevent practices by the security forces that violate human rights, including unlawful killings, arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment
- Review the security forces' rules of engagement and bring them into line with Nigeria's constitution and its obligations under international human rights law and standards
- Investigate and prosecute those responsible for human rights violations and ensure victims are given adequate compensation and reparation

I look forward to your response and would be pleased to provide any further information you might require.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Nicolas J Beger  
Director

CC:

Nicholas Westcott, European External Action Service, Managing Director for Africa  
Véronique Arnault, European External Action Service, Director for Human Rights and Democracy  
Peteris Ustubs, European External Action Service, Director for West and Central Africa  
Sean Doyle, European External Action Service, Head of Division for West Africa  
David Macrae, EU Ambassador to Nigeria  
Fiona Lunny, Chair of the Council Working Party on Africa