



# SOCIO-ECONOMIC RIGHTS & ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT

Thursday, 8 August 2019

Letter Calling for UN Human Rights Council Special Session on Nigeria

To: Member and Observer States of the United Nations Human Rights Council

Your Excellency,

Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project (SERAP) urges the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) to urgently convene a special session on Nigeria over arbitrary arrests and repression by the Nigeria Police and other law enforcement agencies of ‘RevolutionNow’ peaceful protesters, organizers, activists, and journalists who covered the protests across the country, and suppression of freedom of expression, attacks on journalists, bloggers, and human rights defenders by several state governments, as well as the growing intimidation and harassment of Amnesty International in Nigeria, including by a group of apparently paid protesters that continues to besiege the organization’s office in Abuja, preventing it from carrying out its activities, and giving the organization ultimatum to leave Nigeria.

SERAP is a non-profit, nonpartisan, legal and advocacy organization devoted to promoting transparency, accountability and respect for socio-economic rights in Nigeria. SERAP received the Wole Soyinka Anti-Corruption Defender Award in 2014. It has also been nominated for the UN Civil Society Award and Ford Foundation’s Jubilee Transparency Award. SERAP serves as one of two Sub-Saharan African civil society representatives on the governing Committee of the UNCAC Coalition, a global anti-corruption network of over 380 civil society organizations (CSOs) in over 100 countries.

The authorities have arbitrarily arrested Omoyele Sowore, the organiser of the ‘RevolutionNow’ protests and Publisher of the online newspaper Sahara Reporters. He is still currently detained by the Department of State Services. Several protesters and journalists continue to be targeted, including a former Politics Editor with Daily Trust, Ibrahim Dan-Halilu, who has been reportedly re-arrested.

There are serious violations of the rights of Nigerians to liberty, personal security, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, association, and media freedom and a Special Session is urgently needed to help stem the attack on human rights and contribute to UN efforts to prevent further violations and abuses including arbitrary detention and excessive use of force.

The human rights situation in the country has drastically deteriorated, with the authorities at the Federal and State levels violating human rights and refusing to obey court judgments. The Human Rights Council should heed the rising chorus of concerns by

Nigerians, journalists, human rights defenders, activists, and lawyers, and urgently convene a Special Session on the growing human rights crisis in the country.

At the Special Session, the Council should adopt a resolution that:

1. Urges the Nigerian authorities at the Federal and State levels to respect the peoples' rights to freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly, and association as guaranteed in UN human rights treaties ratified by Nigeria and to refrain from using excessive force to disperse protesters and against journalists;
2. Urges the Nigerian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all those arbitrarily detained in connection with the 'RevolutionNow' protests across Nigeria simply for exercising their human rights to protest and freedom of expression;
3. Urges the Nigerian authorities at Federal and State levels to stop harassing and intimidating Nigerian citizens including peaceful protesters, journalists, human rights defenders, and others who seek to exercise their rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly;
4. Expresses its deep concern about the rapidly deteriorating human rights situation in Nigeria and the impact of the crisis on the Nigerian people, as well as about the targeted attacks on peaceful protesters, human rights defenders, journalists, and Amnesty International in Nigeria;
5. Condemns in the strongest possible terms the attacks on 'RevolutionNow' protesters, journalists, and bloggers by the Nigerian authorities at both Federal and State levels, as well as the ongoing impunity enjoyed by perpetrators;
6. Demands that the Nigerian authorities at both the Federal and State levels end these violations and abuses as a matter of critical and urgent priority, including by immediately halting repression of real or suspected opponents and critics, and by conducting thorough, impartial and independent investigations with a view to bringing those responsible to justice and providing victims with redress;
7. Calls on the Nigerian authorities at both the Federal and State levels to fully cooperate with the UN Special Rapporteurs, including by allowing them free access to the country to investigate all allegations of human rights violations against protesters, journalists, bloggers, human rights defenders and other Nigerians;
8. Requests the High Commissioner for Human Rights to report to the Human Rights Council on the human rights situation in Nigeria, and to regularly brief the Human Rights Council on developments

Consistent with its mandate to prevent human rights violations and respond promptly to human rights emergencies, the Human Rights Council should address the rapidly deteriorating human rights situation in Nigeria as a matter of priority. We urge your delegation to actively support the holding of a Special Session of the Human Rights Council without delay and the adoption of a resolution that ensures meaningful attention to the situation with a view to stemming the abuses and ending impunity.

The Human Rights Council cannot ignore persistent attacks on human rights and disregard for the rule of law in Nigeria. If the Human Rights Council does not assume its

responsibility and give voice to the victims, it would exacerbate the impunity of perpetrators and continue to fuel further abuses.

Thanking you in advance of your attention to these pressing issues. SERAP is available to provide your delegation with further information as required.

Sincerely,

Kolawole Oluwadare

Deputy Director