

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Testimony from the Torture Chambers of Nigeria

### Chinwe

*Chinwe will be available for interview at Amnesty International's press conference in Abuja on 18 September.*

Police arrested Chinwe at the hotel where he works on 31 July 2013. Two guns and a human skull had been found in the hotel. He told Amnesty International that officers stripped him and the 12 other hotel staff (six women and six men), beat them, placed them in an unventilated police van and left it in direct sunlight for five hours.

On 1 August they were moved to the Special Anti-Robbery Squad's centre in Awkuzu, Anambra state. He told Amnesty International:

*"I was thrown inside a cell. I noticed a written sign on the wall "Welcome to hell fire"... I was taken to the interrogation room. There was a police officer at one end with two suspects who were chained together. That was the 'theatre' – the interrogation room. I saw ropes streaming down from the ceiling tops, bags of sand elevated on the perimeter wall fence of the hall and all types of rod and metal in different shapes and sizes. I heard shouts and screams from torture victims... I saw buckets of water on standby in case anybody faints or opts to die before appending [their] signature to already written statements."*

Chinwe described how four officers questioned him about his family and academic background, tied him by his hands and legs, passed a rod between them and elevated him from a perimeter wall. They poured water on him whenever he passed out from the pain.

Chinwe was charged with murder and remanded in custody. He has since been freed on bail and is currently awaiting trial.

### Musa

Musa is a market vendor at his village in Yobe state. On 7 October 2012, soldiers from Nigeria's infamous Joint Task Force arrived at the village looking for people associated with Boko Haram and arrested Musa along with over 180 other people.

Musa told Amnesty International that he and the other detainees were taken to a detention centre in Potiskum known as the 'rest house'. He said that soldiers forced him and six other men into a deep hole in the ground, in which four other men were already standing.

The bottom of the hole was littered with broken glass and Musa and the others had to stand barefoot on the glass.

Musa said he spent three days in the hole. He discovered one of the other men had already been there for three days. The man's hands were tied behind his back and his skin

was peeling off because the cable his hands were tied with had been doused in acid. His body was covered in blood. According to Musa, the soldiers would also periodically pour cold water or hot melted plastic on them while they were in the hole.

Afterwards Musa was transferred to Damaturu camp, known as 'Guantanamo', where he was left for three days without food or drink. Musa says soldiers walked on detainees in their boots, beat them in the morning, and kept them in unventilated cells all day. He estimated that one or two people died in the camp every day as a result of the treatment.

Musa was eventually released from the camp without charge, but had to flee his home for fear that he would be picked up and tortured again.

A former soldier who served at Damaturu confirmed to Amnesty International how torture was routinely used at the camp.

*"...An electrified baton is used on a person to make them talk. People have also been tied up [outdoors] for long periods, their limbs tied to the wire around the basketball court. They tie people with their hands stretched behind their arms (Tabay)... people kept like that for six or seven hours lose their hands, people kept like that much longer can even die. The interrogators also shot many people in the knees, or use sticks to beat them..."*

### **Abosedede**

Abosedede was 24 years old when police arrested her in Lagos on 18 November 2013. She told Amnesty International she was held for five months on suspicion of theft and repeatedly sexually assaulted while in custody. She also said that policemen constantly verbally abused her, calling her and the other women in detention 'prostitutes' and 'robbers'.

She said that on a number of occasions during her detention a policewoman would take her to a small room and tell her to undress and lie down. The officer told her to 'confess' to the theft while firing tear gas spray into her vagina. She resisted for several traumatic episodes, but eventually gave in for fear of the pain. Despite bleeding as a result of the torture, she was never taken to hospital.

Abosedede was charged with theft and remanded in custody at Kirikiri women's prison in Lagos. She is still in prison awaiting trial now, ten months after her arrest.

### **Moses Akatugba**

Moses was 16 years old and awaiting the results of his secondary school exams when his life changed forever. On 27 November 2005, the Nigerian army hit him and charged him with stealing three phones.

Moses describes being shot in the hand and soldiers beating him on the head and back during his arrest. He was initially held at the army barracks, where he said soldiers showed him a corpse and when he was unable to identify the dead man, he was beaten.

After being transferred to Epkan police station in Delta State he suffered further torture

and ill-treatment. Moses told one human rights defender that the police severely beat him with machetes and batons; tied and hanged him for several hours in interrogation rooms and used pliers to pull-out his fingernails and toe nails in order to force him to sign two confessions.

Moses' trial took place at the High Court in Effurun, Delta State. The investigating officers failed to show up and Moses was convicted solely on the basis of the victim's statement (which Moses' counsel claims to be full of inconsistencies) and the two confessions Moses made under duress.

After eight years in prison, Moses was sentenced to death by hanging. Moses Akatugba was never given the chance to challenge the Court for the alleged acts of torture suffered during his detention. Today he sees his family just twice a month, as he sits and waits on death row. In February 2014, Moses told them:

*"The pain of torture is unbearable. I never thought I would be alive till this day. The pain I went through in the hands of the officers was unimaginable. In my whole life, I have never been subjected to such inhuman treatment."*