

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Nigeria: Two-faced on torture

Although Nigeria prohibits torture and other ill-treatment in its constitution and has signed numerous international human rights protocols banning the violation, authorities continue to turn a blind-eye to torture and have not even made the violation a criminal offence. The following facts and figures give an idea of the scale of the problem and the government's prolonged failure to act.

Torture by numbers

5,000 – the *minimum* estimated number of people detained since 2009 since military operations began against the armed group Boko Haram, many of whom have been tortured or otherwise ill-treated

500 – number of interviews with torture survivors, detainees, their relatives, rights defenders and lawyers Amnesty International conducted during its research

20 – the number of research visits to Nigeria made by Amnesty International that contributed to this report

12 – the number of commonplace torture methods documented in Amnesty's report

7 – the number of years since the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture found that torture had become an “intrinsic part of the functioning of the police in Nigeria” and recommended torture to be criminalised.

7 – the number of international protocols banning torture that Nigeria is party to and is failing to implement

2 – the number of years that legislation criminalizing torture has been pending in the Nigerian parliament

1 – Informal Officer in Charge of Torture, known as O/C Torture, in some Nigerian police stations

Nigeria's top torture techniques

The Nigerian police and military commonly use a disturbing range of methods to torture people in custody:

- Beatings, including with whips, gun butts, machetes, batons, sticks, rods and cables
- Rape and sexual assault, including inserting bottles and other objects into a woman's vagina
- Shooting people in the leg, foot or hand during interrogation
- Extracting nails, teeth, fingernails and toenails with pliers
- Suspending detainees upside down by their feet for hours
- Tying detainees to a rod by their knees and elbows and suspending them as on a roasting spit
- Starvation
- Forcing people to sit, lie or roll on sharp objects, such as glass or a board with nails

- Electric shocks, including administering shocks to the genitals
- Choking with ropes until victims faint
- 'Tabay' – when officers tie detainees elbows behind their backs and suspend them
- 'Water torture' – when hot and cold water are poured on naked bodies

Failing in its obligations

By allowing routine torture to go unchecked, Nigeria's government is breaching its agreements under:

1. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
2. United Nation Convention against Torture and the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture
3. International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance
4. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
5. Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
6. Convention on the Rights of the Child
7. The Geneva Conventions – common Article 3, and the Second Additional Protocol