

SOLIDARITY STATEMENT WITH HEDA RESOURCE CENTRE, NIGERIA

Nairobi, 4 April 2022

We, the undersigned pan-African and international human rights organisations, are deeply concerned about the latest attacks against human rights defenders (HRDs) in Nigeria, Africa. On the night of 28 March 2022, five armed men forcibly entered the home of Mr Olanrewaju Suraju's, the Chairman of the Human and Environmental Development Agenda (HEDA Resource Centre). This is according to a [statement](#) by the Executive Secretary of the HEDA Resource Centre. Numerous personal and work items were stolen, including phones, laptops, jewellery, a car, bankcards, and office documents, among other valuables. Mr Suraju was forced to provide all his security details including phone passwords, bank log-in details and laptops passwords. The assailants, who were heavily armed with guns, knives, and other dangerous weapons, also threatened Mr Suraju's life and physically assaulted him and his wife, both of whom were subsequently hospitalized.

In light of the above, we call on the federal government of Nigeria and its investigative agencies to move with speed to bring the perpetrators to justice. Considering the prevailing circumstances, we strongly feel that this is an attack on the human rights and anti-corruption work that the HEDA Resource Centre has been carrying out, and is an attempt to intimidate other human rights defenders and whistle-blowers in Nigeria. We strongly condemn this act and express our utmost solidarity with HEDA Resource Centre.

It must not be overlooked that Nigerian HRDs operate in a challenging context, and have been victims of aggressions, with some HRDs paying with their lives to defend their commitment to human and environmental rights. We remember these defenders, such as Ken Saro-Wiwa, Saturday Doobee, Nordu Eawo, Daniel Gbokoo, Paul Levera, Felix Nuate, Baribor Bera, Dr. Barinem Kiobel, and John Kpuinen.

We recall that the Federal Republic of Nigeria is a State Party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (the African Charter) and is a signatory to the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption (AUCPCC). As per the Charter and the Convention and their supporting Resolutions, the Nigerian government is responsible for and expected to:

1. To promote and give full effect to the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, taking all necessary measures to ensure the protection of human rights defenders¹;
2. To fulfil all its obligations as stipulated in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, notably that it is the primary responsibility of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to promote and protect human rights in Nigeria;
3. To take all the necessary measures to ensure to all Nigerian human rights defenders an environment conducive to carrying out their activities without fear of any acts of violence, threats, reprisals, discrimination, pressure and any arbitrary acts by State or non-State actors as a result of their human rights activities².
4. Engage in the fight against corruption and related offences in Nigeria, creating an enabling environment that permits civil society and the media to hold governments to the highest levels of transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs, as indicated within articles 3 & 12 of the AUCPCC.

We ask the government of Nigeria to investigate this case of physical assault and theft against Mr Olanrewaju Suraju, his family and the HEDA Resource Centre. The Nigerian government should guarantee their security during this time and into the future, and commit to creating a safe and enabling environment for Nigerian HRDs.

We call upon the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) Commissioners and Special Mandate holders to advocate for the protection of HRDs in Nigeria, and to engage with the Nigerian government to construct a safer environment to defend rights, notably through public policies for the protection of HRDs.

We call on international actors to denounce this attack on the HEDA Resource Centre and the wider community of Nigerian HRDs, and to engage with the Nigerian government so their duty to ensure accountability, justice and protection is respected.

¹ <https://www.achpr.org/sessions/resolutions?id=74>

² <https://www.achpr.org/sessions/resolutions?id=171>

Signed by:

1. Protection International Africa
2. Protection International
3. HAKI Africa – Kenya
4. Association d'actions de Paix et de développement communautaire (APADEC) – DRC
5. Women HRDs Hub – Kenya
6. South Sudan Human Rights Defenders Network (SSHRDN)
7. Child Pearl Organization South Sudan (CPOSS)
8. Kalkal Human Rights Development Organization (KAHRDO) – Somalia
9. Women in Justice Africa – Kenya
10. Action 54 – South Sudan
11. Coalition for Somalia Human Rights Defenders (CSHRDs) – Somalia
12. Youth Forum for Social Justice Secretariat – Uganda
13. BAWAC – Cameroon
14. LITE Africa – Nigeria
15. Coalition for Grassroots Human Rights Defenders – Kenya
16. Réseau pour la Réforme du Secteur de Sécurité et de Justice (RRSSJ) – DRC
17. African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS) – The Gambia
18. iAfrika – Nigeria
19. International Service for Human Rights
20. Partnership for Justice - Nigeria
21. Vision Spring Initiatives (VSI) – Nigeria
22. Bunge Mashinani Initiative – Kenya
23. FIDH, within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
24. OMCT (World Organisation Against Torture), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders