



AVOCATS SANS FRONTIERES
France
Là où la défense n'a plus la parole

Press release

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ASF France urges Nigeria to refrain from executions, calls for action to reduce awaiting trial population in Custodial centres

Avocats Sans Frontières France (Lawyers Without Borders France) is deeply concerned by the recent recommendations offered by the Minister of Interior as a means to decongesting prisons all over the country. The Minister of Interior, Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola on Friday, 24th July 2021 speaking at the inauguration of the Osun State Command headquarters complex of the Nigeria Correctional Service in Osogbo, urged state governors to sign the death warrants of three thousand and eight (3008) detainees as a means to decongest correctional facilities nationwide.

It is worrisome to learn that out of the total prison population of 68,747 inmates, only 17,755 inmates are the actual convicts with 50,992 inmates representing about 74% are awaiting trial.

The statistics as revealed by the Minister clearly shows that the current congestion in Nigerian Prisons is as a result of the disturbing high number of awaiting trial inmates and not the minority population on death row.

In our view, a more constructive approach would be a declaration of a state of emergency in Nigeria's criminal justice system with programs and initiatives rolled out to tackle the slow pace of justice delivery in Nigeria. This should be done with a view to reducing the awaiting trial population, many of whom have spent 8 years or more awaiting trial.

The call for execution by the Minister comes at a time when many countries across the globe and particularly in Africa continue to move away from using the death penalty due to its injustices. Just 3 days ago, Sierra Leone became the latest nation to abolish the death penalty after Malawi.

Avocats Sans Frontières France uses this opportunity to reiterate that the death penalty is Inhumane, obsolete and does serve as a deterrent. It is used disproportionately against the poor. It is a violation of the Right to life and execution is irreversible even where fresh evidence surfaces to exonerate the convicted

ASF France urges the Nigerian government to declare an official moratorium on execution while it tackles the huge problem created by the awaiting trial population in Nigeria. We remain committed to working with national partners to address the challenge of prison congestion in Nigeria.