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FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

Head of state and government	Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (replaced Olusegun Obasanjo in April)
Death penalty	retentionist
Population	137.2 million
Life expectancy	46.5 years
Under-5 mortality (m/f)	193/185 per 1,000
Adult literacy	69.1 per cent

After elections marred by widespread violence and widely criticized by observers, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua was declared winner of presidential elections in April. The security forces continued to commit human rights violations in the oil-rich Niger Delta with impunity, and few among the local population benefited from the region's oil wealth. The police and security forces extrajudicially executed hundreds of people. Religious and ethnic tensions persisted.

Background

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) disqualified Vice-President Atiku Abubakar as presidential candidate, but the Supreme Court ruled shortly before the 21 April election that he could stand. The presidential, governorship, and state and national assembly elections were widely criticized: the ECOWAS observation mission said there were gross irregularities and the EU observation mission said the elections fell short of basic international and regional standards for democratic elections. Nigerian organizations including the Nigerian Bar Association and the Transition Monitoring Group stated that the elections were not credible. In the months following the elections, five governors were removed from office by the Supreme Court.

The new President's agenda focused on development, power and energy, food, security – including in the Delta – wealth, transport, land and education. He expressed his intention to reform the election process. Mike Okiro was appointed as acting Inspector General of Police (IGP), and confirmed in post in November.

In June the UN International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights refused to renew Nigeria's membership because of the "irregular removal" of the former executive secretary of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Bukhari Bello, who was dismissed four years before the expiry of his contract.

A Freedom of Information Bill was passed by the previous Senate, but was not signed into law by then President Obasanjo. In September, the new President of the Senate stated that the Senate would re-examine the bill.

The first female speaker of the House of Representatives was elected, but she was forced to resign in October after a corruption scandal.

Seven former state Governors were prosecuted for alleged corrupt practices.

Election violence

Widespread political violence linked to the April elections led to the deaths of at least 200 people. Among those killed were candidates running for political office, their supporters, INEC officials and bystanders. The election period also saw attacks on journalists, intimidation and harassment of voters, and widespread destruction of property. There was also political violence around the local government elections in November and December.

Politicians used armed gangs in their electoral campaigns to attack their opponents and their supporters. The government failed to take effective action to deal with the violence or to address the role of politicians in fomenting it.

President Yar'Adua reportedly ordered the acting IGP to reopen the investigation into several unsolved political killings from previous years, including those of Chief Bola Ige, Marshall Harry, Chief Funsho Williams, Chief Barnabas Igwe and his wife, and Godwin Agbroko.

Death penalty

In December Amnesty International and Nigerian NGOs uncovered evidence of at least seven executions by hanging carried out in 2006 in Kaduna, Jos and Enugu prisons, although on 15 November 2007, a Nigerian government representative at the UN had stated "we have not carried out any capital punishment in recent years in Nigeria". After Amnesty International revealed its findings, a Kano state official confirmed to the BBC that the executions had taken place. Nigeria has not officially reported any executions since 2002.

At the end of 2007, 784 inmates were on death row, more than 200 of whom had been there for over 10 years. In 2007 at least 20 death sentences were handed down.

In May, the Presidential Commission on Reform of the Administration of Justice reiterated the conclusion of the National Study Group on the Death Penalty in 2004 and called for an official moratorium on executions until the Nigerian criminal justice system could ensure fair trials in death penalty cases.

The Minister of Information announced on 17 May that Nigeria had granted an amnesty to all prisoners over 70 and to those 60 or older who had been on death row for 10 years or more. According to the minister, they were to be released before the inauguration of the new President on 29 May. However, the government did not make public whether this had happened, and no reports of releases were received.

On 1 October, on the 47th anniversary of Nigeria's independence, four state governors announced pardons and commutation of sentences for 57 death-row prisoners.

The Niger Delta

The security forces continued to commit frequent human rights violations in the Niger Delta. Violations included extrajudicial executions, torture and destruction of homes. Militants kidnapped dozens of oil workers and their relatives, including children, and attacked many oil installations.

In the run-up to the April 2007 elections, violence in the Delta increased as politicians used armed gangs to attack their opponents. After the elections, the violence, rather than decreasing, increased yet further.

In August, rival gangs clashed in the streets of Port Harcourt, killing at least 30 people and injuring many more, including bystanders. More died when the Joint Military Taskforce (JTF) intervened using helicopters and machine-guns – at least 32 gang members, members of the security forces and bystanders were killed. Following the clashes, a curfew was imposed. Many people with no connection to the gangs were reportedly arrested, although the commander of the JTF denied this. The violence continued and intensified towards the end of the year. By the end of 2007 the JTF was still deployed in the city and the curfew was still in place.

No action was known to have been taken to bring to justice members of the security forces suspected of being responsible for grave human rights violations in previous years. Reports of two judicial commissions of inquiry were not made public. The commissions examined events in February 2005 – a raid by members of the JTF in Odioma, in which at least 17 people were killed, and a protest at the Escravos oil terminal, when soldiers fired on protesters.

People living in the Niger Delta lacked drinking water and electricity, and had few functioning schools or health care centres.

Extrajudicial executions

Members of the police and security forces extrajudicially executed hundreds of people. These included killings by police during routine road checks or for refusing to pay a bribe, shootings of suspected armed robbers on arrest, and extrajudicial executions of detainees in police stations. The military were also frequently involved in extrajudicial executions, especially in the Niger Delta. On 27 March, the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions stated at the Human Rights Council that Nigeria must end extrajudicial executions by police.

The acting IGP stated that in the first 100 days he was in office, 1,628 armed robbers were arrested and 785 were killed by the police. NGOs alleged that the number of killings was higher. Despite the alarming number of such

killings, the government took very little action to address the problem. On the contrary, the police were encouraged to shoot armed robbers. On 23 October, the Commissioner of Police of the Federal Capital Territory, for example, ordered his men to shoot on sight armed robbers caught in the act of committing a crime.

Torture and other ill-treatment

The culture of impunity for torture and ill-treatment by the police continued. The UN Special Rapporteur on torture concluded in March that torture and ill-treatment were widespread in police custody, and particularly systemic in criminal investigation departments.

Violence against women

In January, the Federal Minister of Women's Affairs expressed the government's intention to promote gender equality as well as the welfare and rights of Nigerian women and children. However, violence against women remained pervasive, including domestic violence, rape and other sexual violence by state officials and private individuals. The underlying factors included the entrenched culture of impunity for human rights violations committed by the police and security forces, and the authorities' consistent failure to exercise due diligence in preventing and addressing sexual violence by both state and non-state actors.

In May a bill to implement the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women failed to pass in the National Assembly. Nigeria ratified the Convention in 1985.

The Domestic Violence and Other Related Matters Bill was passed by the Lagos House of Assembly. At federal level, a bill addressing domestic violence failed to become law.

The Nigeria Law Reforms Commission proposed in August that rape should carry a 15-year jail term.

Justice system

Despite several announcements by the government that it would reform prisons, no action was evident.

Of a prison population estimated by the government at 45,000, approximately 25,000 were awaiting trial, many for over five years.

On 10 January, the chairman of the Presidential Committee on Prisons Reform and Rehabilitation made public that N7.8 billion (approximately

US\$ 67 million) had been reserved for the first phase of a prison reform program. However, no action to implement the program was reported during the year.

In May the Presidential Committee published a list of 552 inmates recommended for release. They included detainees who had spent over 10 years awaiting trial or whose case files had been lost; inmates with life-threatening diseases; inmates older than 60; and inmates who had spent more than 10 years on death row. The federal government did not follow this recommendation, but announced the release of all inmates older than 70. However, no such releases were reported.

Long delays in the justice system, appalling conditions and severe overcrowding contributed to growing despair and frustration amongst inmates. There were riots in at least three prisons – Kuje, Kano central and Agodi – in which at least 20 inmates died and many were injured.

Freedom of expression

Human rights defenders and journalists critical of the government continued to face intimidation and harassment. Many were arrested by the State Security Service (SSS) and released after interview.

- A US citizen and director of a Nigerian-based NGO, a Nigerian staff member and two German journalists were arrested by the SSS in September on suspicion of spying. They were later released without charge.
- In September a journalist was beaten unconscious when he covered a prison riot in Ibadan.
- The SSS arrested several journalists in October who had criticized the governors of Borno and Akwa Ibom states.

Forced evictions

Several incidents of forced evictions were reported as well as frequent threats of forced evictions. In July President Yar'Adua ordered that the arbitrary demolition of houses must be stopped and that due process should be followed. The Federal Capital Territory (FCT) however, continued demolishing houses in Abuja. By the end of 2007, there were more than 450 cases pending in the FCT courts objecting to demolitions.

Following the violence between armed gangs in Port Harcourt, the governor decided in August to demolish homes in the waterfront area of the city and replace them with 6,000 new housing units. This plan was suspended in October when the governor was removed.

Discrimination – LGBT rights

A draft bill to punish with a five-year prison term anyone involved in a same-sex marriage, or who aided or abetted such a marriage, was discussed by the National Assembly in February. First introduced in 2006, it was not passed by the National Assembly before the change of government. A similar bill was discussed by the previous Lagos state House of Assembly; the bill did not pass.

- In April, five women went into hiding in Kano after they were accused by the Hisbah, the Islamic police, of holding a lesbian marriage ceremony in a theatre. The women denied that they had married each other and emphasized that the ceremony was to raise money. Following this incident, the Hisbah demolished several theatres in the city.

- In August, 18 men were arrested in Bauchi state and charged with belonging to an unlawful society, committing indecent acts and criminal conspiracy.

Amnesty International visits/reports

- Amnesty International delegates visited Nigeria in January, March and July.
- Nigeria: Joint statement on ending political violence and human rights abuses as April elections approach (AFR 44/002/2007)
- Nigeria: Impunity for political violence in the run-up to the April 2007 elections (AFR 44/004/2007)
- Nigeria elections: Attack impunity not human rights! (AFR 44/010/2007)
- Nigeria: Are human rights on the political agenda? (AFR 44/013/2007)
- Nigeria: Amnesty International delegates say prison conditions 'appalling' (AFR 44/019/2007)
- Nigeria: Violence in Port Harcourt escalates (AFR 44/020/2007)
- Nigeria: 47th Independence Day – A new opportunity to abolish the death penalty (AFR 44/021/2007)
- Nigeria: Local government elections – No lessons learned (AFR 44/027/2007)
- Nigeria: Stop executions – Adopt a moratorium, joint public statement by Nigerian NGOs and Amnesty International – 17 December 2007 (AFR 44/030/2007)