



Amnesty International

Group 524

February 2021



**No February Meeting
Pastor Tendo Released!
Nigerian Updates**

Pastor Steven Tendo Released!

Last October we wrote letters on behalf of Pastor Steven Tendo, a Ugandan asylum seeker in ICE custody. Please see the statement on his release on page 2.

ICE Detention Focus During President Biden's First 100 Days

Governor Tom Wolf can use his public health authority to pressure ICE to substantially reduce its immigration detention populations in facilities in the state, mitigate the otherwise inevitable spread of COVID-19, and protect immigrants and asylum-seekers. A model letter to Governor Wolf is on page 3.

Courts Rule in Favor of Nigerians

Court victories in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom for Nigerian environmentalists who have fought Royal Dutch Shell over pollution in the Niger delta were announced (pages 4 and 5). We have been supporting them since the 1990's Just Earth (Amnesty/Sierra Club) campaign, when Ken Saro-Wiwa and others were executed for their activism.

Amnesty International Group 524

Meeting Schedule: Third Tuesday of the month, at 7:00 p.m.

Meeting Location: Providence Heights

9000 Babcock Blvd., Allison Park, PA 15101



Contact John Belch (joheb@aol.com or 412-766-1894) for more information on material in this mailing, or visit the Amnesty USA web site (www.amnestyusa.org) and Group 39's Amnesty Pittsburgh web site (www.amnestypgh.org).

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We received extraordinary news last night: after nearly 26 months of detention, Pastor Steven Tendo was released from ICE detention!!

While in detention, Pastor Steven's health severely deteriorated. For an extended period, his diabetes was left untreated. Due to our collective pressure, he was able to finally receive the medical care he urgently needed for his diabetes and other health conditions. Yet, despite his compromised auto-immune system, ICE continued to detain him during COVID-19 outbreaks at the detention facility.

The journey to free him has been intense, and we wouldn't be here without the advocacy of our activist groups and Amnesty members like you!

Our work to free Pastor Steven is a crucial part of Amnesty's priority 100 Days campaign to convince President Biden to free people – including all the families – from detention. Please continue to take and share the campaign's online action to President Biden, as well as other actions on our 100 days campaigning landing page: www.amnestyusa.org/100days

Sincere thanks to all your group members for taking action to free Pastor Steven! Please share this great victory with them.

In solidarity,

Edwin Gur
Community Program Coordinator
Amnesty International USA



Governor Thomas Wolf
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf:

Given the humanitarian challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and your responsibility to protect the public health of Pennsylvania residents, I call on you to urge Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to immediately and substantially reduce occupancy in facilities detaining immigrants and asylum-seekers in Pennsylvania.

- The release of these individuals from detention is both necessary and legally authorized under existing federal laws and regulations. Detaining large numbers of people during the pandemic not only places those detained and staff at severe risk but also threatens the health and safety of the broader public. For this same reason, transfers of individuals between detention facilities, or from state and local jails to detention facilities, must be restricted.

- Given the documented inadequacies of medical care and basic hygiene in immigration detention facilities, it is of vital importance for state public health authorities to address the state-wide risk posed by crowded immigration detention facilities.

The release of immigrants is warranted in the public interest to reduce the number of individuals in detention to limit the spread of COVID-19 to both detained individuals and staff and ensure that medical staff and area hospitals have the capacity to manage any cases that may arise.

As the government official responsible for the health and safety of your state's residents, I urge you to take all possible actions to pressure ICE to release immigrants and asylum-seekers detained in Pennsylvania without delay and that all appropriate steps are taken to protect them, facility staff, and the broader public from the threat posed by the COVID-19 pandemic in ICE detention facilities.

Sincerely,



AFTER 13 YEARS, JUSTICE!" DUTCH COURT ORDERS SHELL OIL TO PAY FOR HARM DONE TO NIGERIAN FARMERS

Global environmental justice campaigners heralded a Dutch court's ruling Friday that Royal Dutch Shell's Nigerian subsidiary must pay punitive restitution to Nigerian villages for oil spill contamination that [brought](#) death, illness, and destruction to Nigerian farmers and communities.

"After 13 years, justice!" [tweeted](#) Friends of the Earth Europe.

The legal effort [seeking](#) accountability for the oil pollution in the Niger Delta, as Agence France-Presse [noted](#), was brought forth by the Netherlands branch of Friends of the Earth, and "has dragged on so long that two of the Nigerian farmers have died since it was first filed in 2008."

"It is a bittersweet victory," he continued, "since two of the plaintiffs, including my father, did not live to see the end of this trial. But this verdict brings hope for the future of the people in the Niger Delta."

The devastation, as Friends of the Earth International (FOEI) has previously [described](#), has been vast:

Between 1976 and 1991, over two million barrels of oil polluted Ogoniland in 2,976 separate oil spills. While oil production has ceased, pipelines operated by Shell still traverse the land, creeks and waterways. Leakages—caused by corroded pipelines as well as bandits—mean that the area is still plagued by oil spills.

It is a painful example of corporate impunity that even when the tireless work of communities, individuals, and campaigners achieves some semblance of justice, it is rarely seen through. And nowhere is this more true than for the Ogoni people in the Niger Delta.

Describing the scene in 2019 at a few of the sites affected by oil spills in the Niger Delta, FOEI added that the "horror of the vast stretch of black, lifeless landscape stretching out in front of us is something that has to be seen in order to be believed."

Nigerian environmental justice advocate Nnimmo Bassey, in a tweet welcoming the new ruling, drew attention to the **late Ken Saro-Wiwa, who, along with other Ogoni rights activists, was [executed](#)** by the country's military in 1995 after leading an uprising against Shell's ecological damage in the region.

"This is also a warning for all Dutch transnational corporations involved in injustice worldwide," Pols continued. "Victims of environmental pollution, land grabbing, or exploitation now have a better chance to win a legal battle against the companies involved. People in developing countries are no longer without rights in the face of transnational corporations."

Shell, for its part, said it was "disappointed" in the ruling and blamed "sabotage" for the oil spills in question.



UK: Landmark ruling forces Shell to face up to its abuses in Nigeria

The UK Supreme Court has today ruled in favour of two Niger Delta communities who are seeking justice for environmental damage caused by Shell (Okpabi et al vs Royal Dutch Shell et al).

The Court found that the Ogale and Bille communities can bring their legal claims for clean-up and compensation against Royal Dutch Shell plc (RDS) and its Nigerian subsidiary, the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC).

The ruling sets an important precedent for holding other multinationals to account. Mark Dummett, Director of Amnesty International's Global Issues Programme, said:

“This landmark ruling could spell the end of a long chapter of impunity for Shell, and for other multinationals who commit human rights abuses overseas. Shell’s own records show the extent of the oil spills which continue to ravage the land of the Ogale and Bille communities, poisoning their water and destroying livelihoods.

“But until now, Shell has managed to avoid cleaning up or paying compensation by maintaining that it is not responsible for the actions of its Nigerian subsidiary - which it owns in full. Shell is happy to reap huge profits from Nigerian land but denies all knowledge when asked to address the human cost. Today’s ruling has shaken the foundations of a business model based on shirking responsibility.

“The fight is not yet won, but this ruling is an important step towards justice. It is a testament to the persistence and courage of the Ogale and Bille communities, who have refused to accept Shell’s excuses and have fought for years get Shell in court. Today’s outcome could pave the way for justice for the many others who live with the consequences of Shell’s pollution. After decades of impunity, Niger Delta communities may finally get to see Shell in the dock.”

Background

In 2015, 40,000 people from the Ogale and Bille communities of the Niger Delta began legal action against Shell in the UK, alleging serious harm to their human rights and well-being. In 2017 the High Court in London held that RDS is merely a holding company which does not exercise any control over the operations of its Nigerian subsidiary and has, therefore, no duty of care towards the communities affected by those operations. In 2018 the Court of Appeal also found that the English courts do not have jurisdiction over the claims, but allowed the Ogale and Bille communities to appeal at the Supreme Court.