



# IHRHL

## INSTITUTE OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN LAW

A Non-Governmental Community-Based Structural Human Rights Education/Research, Conflict Transformation and Public Interest Advocacy Network in the Niger Delta Region.

### **PRESS STATEMENT - Port Harcourt, August 20, 2010**

#### **Extreme Display of Intolerance, Fascism: Rivers Government Has Lost Moral Authority to Govern**

The IHRHL is shocked by the absolute lack of restraint by a 'democratic' government in Rivers state towards the treatment of mere dissent by its opponents in the same Peoples Democratic Party (PDP); as manifested recently in the draconian measures which culminated into the arbitrary confiscation of the certificate of occupancy of the building at No 25 Ohaeto Street, D/Line Port Harcourt, which houses the offices of the factional party, detention of members of its executive, hellish bail conditions, practical intimidation of civil servants not to avail themselves for purposes of signing bail bonds for the detained, taking over of the prosecution of the matter from the police, incessant by the government, regular changes of the charge sheet and display of undue arrogance which depict utter ignorance of the ingredients of an effective participatory democratic process.

The IHRHL strongly notes that for democratic structures to endure, and to be worthy of endurance, they must be more than a mere shell. They must have substance, quality and meaning. They must overtime hear other voices, engage their participation, encourage dialogue, tolerate their protests, protect their freedoms, and respond responsibly to their needs.

The IHRHL notes that the extreme measures, allegedly directly supported and championed by the Chief of Staff to the government, Secretary to the government and the Attorney-general of the state; rather than the leadership of the PDP in the state, depicts of extreme intolerance – fascism, that nakedly threatens freedom of thought, expression, movement and association, as provided in various regional and international human rights instruments, which Nigeria is a contracting party, beyond those who are currently charged. The provisions of the Nigerian Constitution, especially in its Chapter Four, is very clear on the humanity required of any civilized government that must run the affairs of Nigerian citizens.

The IHRHL notes that the ongoing desparate and discriminatory use of unacceptable state power and resources against Rivers citizens for clearly unjustifiable reasons, again smirks of the misuse of the processes of rule of law, to decimate the ideals and principles for which that principle was put in place to protect: fundamental freedoms, human rights and social justice.

The IHRHL notes that the ongoing unguarded desparate measures, is a dangerous threat to the independence of the judicial system, whose integrity wholly depends upon the trust and confidence which the generality of the populace places upon it. An attempt by the state to

seem to use powers reposed upon it by the people, to circumvent the rights and freedoms of the people, including the democratic process, and use the judicial instruments of state to achieve its selfish ends. Denies powerholders concerned, the moral authority to continue to preside over the affairs of men, women and children.

The IHRHL notes that the unreserved admission by the state government that those who until recently were members of their political party, are cultists, proliferate arms, and fund cult groups for political violence, which has made free, fair and credible elections in the state impossible since the May 1999 transition to civilian rule, confirms allegations from several quarters, that the Peoples Democratic Party and its agents are directly responsible for the insecurity of life and property in the state, but engage in series of cover-ups until moments of dissent, like the present.

The IHRHL therefore, seriously warns that this level of state barbarity if not seriously contested by the citizens, shall hold good for the rest of the population, if the government is allowed to sail through unquestioned. Civil society critical change agents, members of the integrity section of the media etc shall gradually and fully become the next target of intimidation and torture as the election months draw closer, because winning for a regime with this characteristics must be at all cost.

Finally, the IHRHL maintains very strongly that so long as there exists in Rivers state a government that can be proud of something near the recent misuse of state power against dissenting opponents from the same political party, or a civilian dictatorship that refuses to apply universally recognized principles to control its own behaviour, it will remain very hard to imagine the possibility of genuine free, fair, and credible elections in 2011 in the state; never mind a democracy with a slight shell. History teaches us that to indulge a government that is proud of this kind of extreme behaviour, shuns participation, devoid of dialogue/debate, proud of inhumanity to the human person at home, eventually brings major dilemmas before the rest of mankind. The struggle for freedom and democracy is far from over in Rivers State of Nigeria.

The IHRHL calls on the totality of the population of Nigeria, national and international democracy organs to show urgent peaceful solidarity by way of assisting in saving democracy in Rivers state, the treasure-base of the land, therefore the entity called Nigeria.

**Signed:**

Anyakwee Nsirimovu  
Executive Director

National Headquarters: #2B Railway Close, D/Line, Humanity, Complex, P. O. Box 2292, Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Tel/Fax: 234-84-231716

internet: <http://www.ihrhl-ng.org> , e-mail: [ihrhl@phca.linkserve.com](mailto:ihrhl@phca.linkserve.com) , [ihrhl@ihrhl-ng.org](mailto:ihrhl@ihrhl-ng.org)